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Israel Bruna

*An Historical Tragedy in
Five Acts*

GOTTHARD DEUTSCH

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ISRAEL BRUNA

*An Historical Tragedy
In Five Acts*

GOTTHARD DEUTSCH



BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER

The Gorham Press

1908

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

WERNER VON PERINSTEIN, burgomaster of
BRUENN.

FIRST COUNCILLOR.

SECOND COUNCILLOR.

PETHAHIAH, an elder of the Jews.

RAPHAEL, an elder of the Jews.

RABBI ISRAEL BRUNA.

FRAIDLIN, the rabbi's wife.

JEKEL, the rabbi's servant.

SHIFRAH, maid in the rabbi's house.

MEINHARD VON PERINSTEIN, son of the Burgo-
master, a knight.

JEKUTHIEL, son of PETHAHIAH, called Konrad,
a convert to Christianity.

JOHN CAPISTRANO, a Franciscan Friar.

SCHOLASTICA, a nun, a former Jewess.

An executioner, councillors, judges, priests,
Jews, and people.

The place is Bruenn. Time 1454.

ACT I

SCENE I. CITY HALL.

Burgomaster Werner von Perinstein, several councillors, two guards standing at the door; later Pethahiah.

Burgomaster.—Men of the Council, I have called you together at this early hour on very important business. This morning a message was received from the King by special courier. His Majesty wishes us to give a hearty reception to brother Capistrano, who, the King says, has been gifted with miraculous powers, and who, the King says, is an instrument in the hands of Providence, to stamp out this heresy which has already disgraced his Majesty's dominions too long.

FIRST COUNCILLOR.—We certainly ought to do our gracious Lord's wishes, all the more so because we will be honoring a great Saint whose presence will be a blessing to our city.

SECOND COUNCILLOR.—A blessing which will result in a bloody civil war.

FIRST COUN.—Not if we stand united and have the support of the Saint's prayers.

SECOND COUN.—His prayer has not kept the Hussites from burning the city hall of Neustadt, when the council refused to expel that Italian trouble maker.

(Shouts.) — Bar the gates against the Welcher!

BURG.—Peace, gentlemen! He comes with the King's safe conduct, and we cannot refuse him admittance without incurring the ill-will of his Majesty, who has once before expressed his dislike of the city's attitude in an internal complication.

SECOND COUN.—His Majesty is in the hands of fanatics who din malicious lies into his ears.

FIRST COUN.—This means that they report truly when they say that in the council of this city men are sitting who still nourish in their hearts a veneration for that arch-heretic, John Huss, whom the holy Council, with the approval of King Sigismund, of blessed memory, ordered to be burned at the stake as an enemy of our holy religion and as a rebel against the sacred person of our King.

SECOND COUN.—John Huss was a saintly man. I was in Constance as a page to my Lord of Rokitzan, and I saw Huss smile as he was led out to the stake, and I saw him kneel down in prayer, praying that the Lord would forgive those who had sentenced him to die. I would like to see how that Italian fiend would act, were he placed at the stake, for that is where he ought to go.

(*Shouts.*)—Burn him! Stone him! Huss was a Saint!

(*Shouts from the other side.*)—He was a rebel and an infidel. Through him we have been living in a state of war for forty years.

(*Shouts from the first side.*)—Because you have been persecuting God's chosen ones.

BURGMASER.—Peace, gentlemen! It will not do for us to quarrel on a question which the masters of holy lore have not been able to settle. The

question which confronts us is what we shall do with regard to the King's letter.

SECOND COUN.— Give that monk three days to stay here, and in the mean time the city guards shall watch him, lest he do mischief.

FIRST COUN.— Let the Burgomaster, the Council, the heads of the guilds, and the clergy with the school children meet him at the city boundary line. Let the bells be tolled from the time he enters the gates until he reaches the cathedral where a "Te Deum" shall be chanted in praise of the Lord for sending this Saint to our gates.

(*Shouts.*)— Cathedral? To the whipping post with the murderer and incendiary!

(*Shouts from the other side.*)— To the whipping post with you rebels and heretics!

BURG.— Peace, gentlemen, do not forget where you are. How do you expect to control a riotous mob when you, the guardians of the city's peace, are rioting yourselves. The Italian comes with a safe-conduct under the King's seal and handwriting. Any stranger who shows such letters is under the protection of the city, and if we allow harm to befall him we are rebels against his Majesty.

SECOND COUN.— And if he make himself unworthy of our hospitable kindness by inciting riots in our midst?

BURG.— That is just the point. He comes with the King's safe conduct, and is our guest, but when he sets the citizens, one against the other, he has forfeited our good will and we shall send him beyond the city limits under the protection of the city guards. But it is our duty to protect him against malefactors while he is in our midst.

SECOND COUN.— Let him keep the peace and he shall not be molested.

FIRST COUN.— It is his mission to lead the lost sheep to the fold from which they have strayed.

BURG.— When a strange physician comes to our city he is allowed to do his business. If, however, I find that he is selling poisonous pills I shall order him to be thrown into prison though he have a safe-conduct from the Roman Emperor and a diploma from the Pope himself. Yes, I would do it, as sure as my name is Werner von Perinstein.

FIRST COUN.— But it is against the poisoners of the soul that he is waging war.

SECOND COUN.— We need no Welcher to take care of our souls. He has plenty of profligates and assassins at home to care for.

(*Shouts.*)— Send him back to Welcherland! Send him back to Italy!

BURG.— Indeed, for the care of our souls we have our own priest. We, Burgomaster and Council, are the guardians of the city's peace and everybody shall enjoy this peace as long as he allows others to do so. What does it concern the city if one march behind a flag with a chalice painted on it? No more than when the piper's guild marches behind St. Cecelia's banner, which does not always inspire as decent conduct as is found among those who follow the chalice.

FIRST COUN.— And—so Turks and pagans and even Jews shall have their freedom just as we have it?

BURG.— Most certainly; and I am glad you mentioned it. We have no Turks or pagans in our

midst, but the Jews, whom your Saint particularly delights in assailing, shall be protected, for they are in the King's peace, and the city is responsible for them; and woe unto the man, whether he wear robe or cassock, who shall dare to trouble them.

FIRST COUN.— There may be others who wear neither a robe nor a cassock, but a knight's armor, and who are, moreover, highly connected, who may wish brother John success in his arraignment of the Jews and their usury. It might be an easy way for them to settle their debts.

BURG. (*rising angrily in his chair*).— Will you explain yourself more clearly?

FIRST COUN.— Your Worship need not get excited. An inquiry amongst your nearest of kin might reveal the fact that there may be some who wish that Brother John should have success in making the Jews disgorge some of their ill-gotten gain.

BURG. (*angrily striking the table*).— If you wish to say that I shall allow pillaging in order that my boy may get rid of his debts to the Jews, I want you to say it here, in unmistakably clear words, and if you do so I shall pronounce you in this council chamber a malicious slanderer, unless you can prove your statement; outside of this room, the sword of a gentleman shall vindicate my honor.

(*Shouts.*)— Backbiter! Hypocrite! Pharisee! !

FIRST COUN.— I most sincerely apologize to your Worship, and if you consider my words coolly, you will find that I have not said what you imply. I merely said that there may be some, and if you wish, your own son amongst them, who will not

mind seeing the Jewish chests disgorge. Such things have happened before, and if you ask Master Dietrich, our city clerk, he will show you that they happened in this very city one hundred years ago.

BURG. (*sitting down calmly*).— And just because it has happened before it shall not happen again. I know the story well enough. It was during the terrible visitation of the black death, when the rabble was unrestrained, and very likely some questionable saints and unscrupulous demagogues (*murmur of applause*) were their leaders. The result was that the rabble celebrated its orgies and grew a terror to the respectable community, while the demagogues enriched themselves with the plunder, and the city was heavily mulcted by the King. When the Jews came back they charged higher interest than ever before.

FIRST COUN. (*looking out of the window*).— Your Worship will have an opportunity to show your good will to these innocent victims of demagogues, for I see that old vampire, Pethahiah, the Jew-Bishop, entering the city hall.

A COUN.— This would be a fine opportunity to squeeze some of his shekels out of him by screwing his thumbs just a little bit. (*Laughter.*)

SECOND COUN.— You come one hundred years too late, brother.

BURG.— I repeat that order shall be preserved as long as I wield the mace of this city.

SCENE II

(*Enter PETHAHIAH, bowing to all sides.*)

PETHAHIAH.— Your Worship, most exalted head

of this noble city, and you, Councillors, whose wisdom and self-sacrificing care have preserved law and order under the most trying conditions. Let one who is unworthy to kiss the dust of your shoes be bold enough ——

BURG.— Be less courteous, Jew, and keep to the point.

SECOND COUN.— You keep one half of your speech and let us Christians keep one half of the interest which you charge us.

FIRST COUN.— That speech is too good. I want all of it. I would rather have it than all his money. Try me, Uncle Pethahiah. Just make an offer.

PETH.— The noble gentlemen are so good to a poor Jew.

FIRST COUN.— Poor Jew! Who ever heard of such a combination.

PETH.— Most worshipful and honorable gentlemen of the Council. If you would condescend to listen to what a man has to say, to whom the honor, the welfare, and the glory of this beautiful city, ruled over by a statesman, the like of whom ——

BURG.— Quick, Jew, do not waste our time.

PETH.— Far be it from me to be guilty of such an offense against the interests not only of this city, but also of the whole land, not only at this time, but also in the future. I have heard that you will have a noble and great guest within your gates, a man who, amongst you, is a Saint.

SECOND COUN.— Don't be such a hypocrite, Pethahiah; say that you hate him as much as you hate the sight of a cross.

PETH.— Far be it from me to hate one whom

my glorious rulers honor and revere. I have always been obedient to the King and to his servants, for that is the law of my religion, and I would never countenance any movement which is directed against the sacred authority of his glorious Majesty, our most gracious King Ladislaus, may his glory increase forever.

SECOND COUN.— Confess it, Pethahiah, did you not lend money to George of Podiebrad, who seeks to place himself on our King's throne?

PETH.— Who said so? If this be so, may the earth swallow me up, as it swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram! May the leprosy of Naaman and Gehazi befall me. May my arms be lame as the arms of Jeroboam, when he desired to seize the prophet. May fire from heaven fall down upon me, such as Elijah called down upon the captain and his band of fifty. May my own flesh and blood serve idols —

SECOND COUN.— This time you speak the truth, because your son, who has become a Christian, is certainly an idol-worshiper in your eyes.

BURG.— Gentlemen, we shall never get through if we open the sluices of his loquacity. Pethahiah, state at once what you wish, or you shall be sent out of this hall.

PETH.— I shall say it at once. (*To BURGOMASTER, who gives beadle a sign.*) No, no, your Worship, may it please you to tarry a moment, I am saying it already. I wish to give the city the sum of one hundred Schock Groschen, as a tribute of respect for the guest, whom the King has honored so greatly in order that the city shall be

able to do him that honor which he so richly deserves, and he shall see that, while I am only a Jew, and not a rich one —

FIRST COUN.— Do you wish to go to the poor-house? If you turn a Christian you shall have the best room in the place to-morrow.

PETH.— Honorable gentlemen, you laugh, but the times are very hard. Were it not that I know that the monk is so honored by the King —

BURG.— You want to buy his favor? If you are afraid that he will set the mob against you, be quiet, and tell your people that I, Werner von Perinstein, will not allow any violence against anybody.

PETH.— Your Worship is wise as King Solomon, and good as Obadiah, the steward of King Ahab, but I shall send the one hundred shock to the holy man myself to show him that Pethahiah —

SECOND COUN.— Podiebrad will have to pay more interest next time for this loss.

PETH.— A rebel! I lend money to a rebel? not for five hundred per cent. You will see when you become a rebel, and you try.

FIRST COUN.— You are a shrewd old fellow.

PETH.— My business is always with good honest people and faithful servants of the King. At your service, most worshipful gentlemen. May you live and prosper. As the sages say, "Misse Meshunah."*

* A Hebrew oath.

ACT II

SCENE I. THE RABBI'S STUDY. PETHAHIAH, RABBI.

PETHAHIAH.— I repeat it to you, the thing will have a bad ending. Our young men were seen in the procession with the Hussites, the rebels against the King's majesty. Such stories are apt to be exaggerated. I have heard rumors already that our enemies had informed the King that we had assisted the rebels with money. This would mean disaster.

RABBI (*smiling*).— Hardly to the young people who love to see a gay pageant and to hear music, for no one would accuse them of having money to lend.

PETH.— It is always the respectable and the loyal who have to make atonement for the levity of the penniless rabble.

RABBI.— If you are free from guilt you can take an oath. Our laws, confirmed by kings and emperors for centuries, give us the right to prove our innocence of any charge by swearing on the Torah.

PETH. (*uneasily*).— Swear by the Torah? I — would rather lose a fortune.

RABBI.— But if you have to, in order to save your life? To assist the King's enemies with money is high treason.

PETH.— This is what I said when the young people went to witness the procession. The King will be provoked to anger, and these boys forget the

warning of Solomon: "Fear God, my son, and the King."

RABBI.—There is another word of wisdom. It reads: "Woe unto the land whose King is a lad." If we try to please the King too much, we shall provoke his uncle, Emperor Frederick, who strongly disapproves of the persecution of people for religious motives, and he is our friend, as he has proven repeatedly, and finally, neither he nor the King are really the rulers. The man who is the king in truth, although he is not on the throne, is George Podiebrad, the leader of the Hussites.

PETH.—He is an arch-rebel. Curse to those who aid him. We Jews must be loyal. Fear the Lord and the King.

RABBI.—Don't get so excited in protesting your loyalty. You waste it in the wrong place, and if they want your money, they won't ask many questions about your politics.

PETH.—But those boys, with their temerity, conjure up the fate. "Don't open the mouth of the evil one." They ought to be excommunicated.

RABBI.—We have no more right to punish the innocent than to let the wicked go unpunished. And what power is there in our discipline? You ought to know best? Did you not obtain from the emperor a privilege that no rabbi should have the right to pronounce a ban against you?

PETH.—Because Rabbi Shalom of Neustadt, your own teacher, persecuted me.

RABBI.—My teacher, of blessed memory, was a man who feared God and no man. You know what our sages predict for him who slanders the righteous in their graves.

PETH. (*frightened*).—I did not, God forbid! May he pray for me in the world of truth! But he allowed himself to be deceived by my rivals in business, to pronounce that excommunication, and I had no other resource except imploring the aid of the Emperor.

RABBI.—You see how little such a ban means. Why should I destroy its force by pronouncing it upon young people for innocent curiosity.

PETH.—But you might preach to them, and threaten them with excommunication if they persist in showing sympathy with the rebels.

RABBI.—Can I reproach them for exhibiting a noble trait of character? The Hussites are fighting for liberty of conscience. We cannot fight for it, but we must hope for victory.

PETH.—Liberty of conscience! A bad word! It covers all sorts of license and it is responsible for the fact that our young people are looking with gluttonous eyes upon the tournaments, and are beginning to despise the customs of the fathers. Indeed, young Shealtiel was caught practising fencing at Juergen Trautenberger's house.

RABBI.—And what of it?

PETH.—And what of it, you say? Should we wait until he eats and drinks at their feasts and worships their God? . . .

RABBI.—Before you condemn him? Most certainly yes. I saw God-fearing and learned young men in Italy practice fencing, and I saw good mothers in Israel play the guitar.

PETH.—I feared these pernicious doctrines, and warned the men of our community when they called

you here. But they said that Rabbi Shalom would not have married his daughter to one who was of doubtful piety.

RABBI.— It was good that you held him in such high esteem, or else you might have been accused of bearing him a grudge for having excommunicated you; and some go even so far as to say that you approached the governor to have him veto my appointment.

PETH.— They are my enemies because I have won the confidence of the nobles through upright dealing and have succeeded in laying by a small amount for an evil day, and more so, because I insist that the young shall not leave the ways of the fathers; therefore I beseech you again, Rabbi, let their sins not go unpunished. Don't spare the rod!

RABBI.— I do not wish to wound you, Pethahiah, but you know from experience with your own flesh that it is not always good to use the rod. Leave it to me. I must answer before God and men.

SCENE II

Enter FRAIDLIN (excited).

FRAIDLIN.— Woe! Woe unto us!

RABBI.— What troubles thee, my beloved?

FRAID.— I tremble. I fear an evil day.

RABBI.— Calm thyself, dear. We are in God's hands.

PETH.— Did they break into any house?

RABBI.— Your loyalty does not seem to inspire you with confidence. (*To FRAID.*) But tell us.

FRAID.— Many strange folks have come into the

town, all heavily armed and fierce looking. The streets are swarming with peasants, from miles around, all wish to hear their great Saint, who, they say, is working many miracles. They are telling stories that an image of the mother of their God, in the convent outside of the gates, has been shedding tears, and one knight, who always has his beaver lowered, is haranguing the multitude, telling them that King Ladislaus' life is in danger from plots made by his uncle, the Emperor, who has been bought by the Jews; and from the Hussites, who wish to make all Christians Jews.

PETH. (*trembling*).— Did I not foresee it ?

RABBI.— Calm yourself. Is this news to you ? Don't we hear it every spring ? Don't we pray every night, " Lord, how many are my enemies ? "

PETH.— But this time it is serious. Rabbi, Rabbi, rebuke the young rebels. Denounce them to the King's castellan.

(RABBI *shakes his head*.)

FRAID.— To me it looks like those troublous days at home, when I was yet a child. You remember when they burned thirty-four in the market square.

RABBI.— " Even though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I fear no evil."

SCENE III

(JEKEL *enters hastily*.)

JEKEL.— Rabbi, it is high time that the Messiah should come; indeed, I believe he is on his way.

RABBI.— If you will foretell it without conditions, I shall fain believe it.

PETH.— Why?

RABBI.— Because after the destruction of the holy temple, the Talmud teaches, the gift of prophecy was taken from the wise and given to the simple?

JEKEL.— When the new temple shall be built, do you think they will make me a prophet?

PETH.— What do you want such an uncertain job for? I shall make you my housekeeper and give you two rooms and one florin in gold every month.

JEKEL.— One florin in gold? Do you mean it?

PETH.— Indeed I do. I shall make a written contract. Call Daniel, the scribe.

RABBI.— Do not mock at the poor fellow, Pethahiah. (*To JEKEL.*) Tell us why thou believest that the Messiah is on his way.

JEKEL.— Because the gentiles must have seen him. A lot of boys just asked me if I had seen him, and when I said no, they jostled me and one of them struck me across the face with his whip, saying I must have surely seen the Messiah's donkey, and that if the Messiah should not be in town to-night, we Jews, all of us, would have a bad time, and they mentioned you, Pethahiah, particularly.

PETH.— What did they say?

JEKEL.— Hans, the harness maker, said he had promised his sweetheart a silk belt with a silver buckle, and he knew he would find one at your house just exactly to suit her.

PETH.— The harnessmaker, you say? I shall have him arrested for his debt. But Rabbi, the times are bad.

RABBI.—Indeed; may God protect us!

PETH.—Shall we not protect ourselves? Let Jekel call all the people to the synagogue early to-night so that everybody shall be in his house by nightfall, and let all the doors be locked and bolted.

RABBI.—This is the night which is guarded by the Almighty. My door shall remain open so that it shall not be a mere mockery when I say, "Let him who is hungry come and feast." What dost thou think, my beloved?

FRAID.—I shall do as thou sayest. But why should I conceal it? I am greatly disturbed. I have lived through such an experience before in my father's house when a horde of drunken fiends burst into our room; and had it not been for a priest, who covered us with his body, holding their sacred image before him, I could not tell the story now.

RABBI.—Thou hast told me thy experience; I shall tell you mine. I was hungry and shivering when I arrived in Padua. The Adige was swollen from the spring floods and I had to wait for three days before a boatman would take me over, and so I arrived in Padua on Passover eve. People had left the synagogue and the streets were deserted. I stood aghast, not knowing where to turn. I could not speak Italian, and even my Hebrew they would hardly understand. Then I beheld a house next to the synagogue, the windows up, a venerable-looking man sitting at the head of the table, and as the doors were wide open I entered, saying the words of the Haggadah, "He who is hungry may

come and feast." I was received without a word of questioning, and my God had brought me to the house of Rabbi Malkiel, my sainted teacher, to whom I owe so much. Wouldst thou turn away a footsore wanderer, were he to come to-night?

FRAID.—I shall welcome him and praise God for having granted me the joy of doing His will.

RABBI.—God bless thee. God bless thee! I knew it. And you, Pethahiah, cheer up, the Holy Spirit does not rest upon a man who is of downcast heart. Cheer up the poor by rich gifts, as you have been blessed.

JEKEL.—And don't forget your promise if the Messiah should come to-night. He will come, won't he, Rabbi?

RABBI.—If it is in God's time, he will.

SCENE IV

Seder at the RABBI'S house. RABBI, RABBI'S wife, JEKEL, SHIFRAH, and two students.

RABBI (*reading*).—"This year servants, next year free men." Oh, that our longings may be realized!

JEKEL.—When we shall be free men in the land of our fathers, will I be permitted to pick berries in the woods and to fish at the lake like the Christians?

RABBI.—Yes, and all other things which are the privilege of people who are their own masters.

JEKEL.—Well, it is about time. Yesterday, while I was fishing and a nice trout was just ready to bite, some boys kicked me into the water, saying that

I should wash off the old Adam. I told them that I had none, and for the holydays I would get a new waistcoat.

RABBI.— Poor fool, whose whole idea of freedom is to pick berries like our forefathers, who would submit to any oppression so long as they had meat and fish.

SHIFRAH.— When the Messiah shall come, will the Jews be allowed to marry just like the Christians without any permit from the governor?

RABBI.— This is thine idea of freedom! Foolish creature! The women of Israel in Egypt, for whose sake our forefathers were delivered from bondage, had no thought of advantages for themselves. They were content to suffer, as long as they could inspire their children with the belief in God's promise that one day the whole nation would be free, and not their nation alone, but all the world would break the shackles of oppression.

(A knock is heard at the door. All are startled.)

RABBI *(calmly)*.— Is the door locked? Have you so little confidence in divine protection, which is mightier than lock and bar?

SHIFRAH.— Forgive, Rabbi. I bolted the door because Golda, the servant in Pethahiah's house, told me that everybody did so.

RABBI.— Those who plot evil against us will not be detained by a barred door. Go and open!

SHIFRAH.— I, Rabbi . . . I am a woman.

JEKEL.— Take thy torch with thee and nobody will carry thee away.

RABBI.— Why not go thyself, Jekel? God guards the simple.

JEKEL.— It may be the city guards who want me because I fished this morning.

RABBI.— Who told thee? May it not be the prophet Elijah? And he who gives him the first welcome will receive the key to King Solomon's treasure and take with him as much as he can carry. (JEKEL *runs.*)

RABBI.— Israel, my people! They would not raise an arm to fight for liberty, but they would risk their lives for the sake of a piece of jewelry.

JEKEL (*returns trembling*).— There are two armed knights outside who ask your permission to enter.

RABBI.— If they ask permission when they can command, let them enter.

FRAID.— They may be highwaymen.

SHIFRAH.— They are armed, O God!

RABBI.— This is the night which is guarded against evil, and have we not said, "Every one who is in want, let him come and feast with us?" I shall make good my word. (*Starts for the door.*)

JEKEL (*running*).— Perhaps it is Elijah in disguise and he carries Solomon's key. I will go.

SCENE V

MEINHARD *and* JEKUTHIEL *enter.*

"Blessed are they who are gathered to do the will of our God."

RABBI.— Your God?

JEKUTHIEL.— Our God and the God of our fathers. We implore your kindness for this night, when we crave to take part in the sacred feast which has been so long denied to us.

RABBI.—Fraidlin, my beloved, thy wish has now been fulfilled. The wanderers to whom thou hast promised to open the door have come.

FRAID. (*agitated*).—Will the strangers not begin the Hagadah* again? We shall wait until they can join us.

JEK.—We shall join you at once. I am not very learned and my friend is still less acquainted with Jewish law and practice. Both of us are of Marranno descent. My friend is from the north of Spain, and I from Toledo. In that large city I had better opportunities than he had to acquire some knowledge of Judaism, although both my father and mother had been raised as Christians. From my childhood on it was my desire to profess openly the God of Israel, and my wish was near fulfillment when I came to Padua, where the great rabbi, Malkiel —

RABBI.—Malkiel, my sainted teacher!

JEKUTH.—You knew him? Then, the blessing of that saint, who in parting told me that the Lord would guide my steps, has become true. He said it to me when in despair I had almost resolved to take my own life. I had lost faith in my destiny, for the Jews of Padua, those who ought to have assisted me in returning to the faith of my fathers, informed against me, to the Inquisition. Oh, when I remember the terrible moment —

FRAID.—Take a cup of wine and speak the benediction.

RABBI.—Let him finish his story; it will give him relief, and to us it will be an inspiring lesson.

*Ritual for Passover Eve.

JEKEL.— The Christian boys never kicked you into the water when you went fishing in the mill-pond, Sir Knight.

JEKUTH.— They would not dare now. (*Embarrassed.*) What a peculiar question! There was indeed a mill pond. . . . How do you come to ask me this question?

RABBI (*smiling*).— Leave him alone. He is harmless. Rather let us hear the end of your story.

JEKUTH.— You may remember, since you were in Venice yourself, that the republic was on bad terms with the Pope ten years ago, and the Pope would eagerly seek an opportunity to start trouble with the Senate of Venice, on the convenient ground that they allowed apostates from Christianity, as they call us, to profess Judaism; and as my only salvation I joined the imperial army. Once in the army they could not so easily seize me, and as I had learned to use my sword, and had won the prize at a tournament under the Emperor's eyes, the Emperor, who is a lover of Israel —

RABBI.— Praised be the Lord who has given him of his power.

JEKUTH. (*continuing*).— The Emperor took personal interest in me. He told me jestingly that I should beware that he might not find anything Jewish in me. And, indeed, I had to conceal my religion again, trusting in God that He would lead me in the Emperor's service to Poland, where so many of our oppressed brethren have found a haven of refuge, and can profess the God of our fathers.

RABBI (*to MEINHARD*).— And you, my friend, are you also of those who seek the Lord from hidden places?

MEINHARD.— Not speak much your language.

RABBI.— Hable Vd. Espanol que ya le comprendo.

JEKUTH. (*quickly*).— My friend is from the Basque provinces in the North of Spain, as I told you, and speaks little Spanish.

FRAID.— And how could you understand each other.

JEKUTH.— We in the imperial army speak all languages a little, and so he confided to me that he was a Jew, by repeating the words which our fathers teach us to use when we meet our brethren. Say them!

MEIN.— “ I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven.”

RABBI.— You have come to us at a time fraught with grave dangers. May He, who gathers in the lost sheep protect the faltering.

(*They continue the services.*) “ Praised be the Almighty who has guarded his promise to Israel —
(*Knocks are heard at the door.*)

VOICE (*from without*).— For God’s sake, Fraidlin, open the door. Milkah desires you.”

FRAID.— Rabbi, will you permit me to leave this feast? You know Milkah, the wife of Laemmlin, the wayfaring man whom the soldiers killed for the sake of the few pennies which he possessed, or perhaps for mere sport and in order to satisfy their brutal instincts. His wife, who came near faring badly at their hands, was saved by the Captain and handed to some of our people who passed by, returning from the fair of Leipsic. She is about to become a mother and desires my presence.

RABBI.— The saving of a human life stands higher in the sight of God than any religious duty. If the poor creature feels relieved by your presence, go; though I shall miss you sadly at this feast.

JEKUTH.— May I accompany you, Wife of the Rabbi? The streets are unsafe at night and particularly at this season.

FRAID.— Thank you, knight. The distance is short and he who trusts in the Lord fears no evil.

RABBI.— We are taught in the law that one who does God's work need fear no evil.

JEKUTH.— It does not behoove us to argue on the ways of God, but I saw my own father stabbed to death on a night like this, when they surprised us in the cellar of our house at the Seder service. I saw my aged grandmother dragged from the cellar to the street by her white hair, and then stoned to death by an infuriated mob.

SHIFRAH.— Why should God, who is just, allow such barbarity?

JEKUTH.— True, dear lass, but this is no question for ignorant people such as we to answer. God's ways are just, but they are hard to understand. I saw the mutilated body of that poor Laemmlin, who had the Tefillin on his head, while his skull was crushed by blows with clubs. Unfortunately, I came too late to save him, but, thank the Lord, I was able to save his wife from a fate worse than death.

RABBI.— The Lord has indeed chosen you to bind up those that are of broken heart, and I am glad that He brought such a worthy guest to the threshold of my home. But to-night it is unnecessary that you trouble yourself. Evildoers are

not in our midst, and against those who come from without, even your valiant arm would avail nothing.

JEKUTH.— The Lord gave to David the power to defeat Goliath, and to Samson the strength to slay a thousand Philistines. But even were it unnecessary let me follow her at a distance that I may have a share in the work of charity.

FRAID.— You wished to participate in the feast, Sir Knight, which has been denied you so long. Why trouble yourself? The rabbi opened the door to you in spite of our fear, because he felt that the Almighty will protect us. Should he not inspire even his own household?

RABBI.— Let him have his will, my beloved. Why should I not trust him, whom Rabbi Malkiel thought worthy of his confidence? Go in peace, my friend, you will return soon.

JEKUTH.— This would mean to betray my calling. If a woman braves the dangers of this agitated city, I shall not be found wanting in my duty. I shall guard the house which she enters, until her work is done and she can return.

(He turns towards the door, following FRAIDLIN, who impatiently hurries out.)

RABBI.— You forget your bundle.

JEKUTH.— It would burden me. My friend will take care of it should we not return in time. There would be no harm to me even if it were forgotten. Our craft carries little that is valuable, and that little is easily replaced when it is lost.

RABBI.— Your going out and your coming in be in peace.

(Seder service continues.)

“May the Lord grant us to celebrate other feasts in joy and peace!”

(Wild noises outside. Service stops. All agitated.)

MEIN. *(rising)*.— They me kill when me find.

RABBI.— A knight and fear!

MEIN.— Not fear when fight, but not fight when not must. And bad people make you dead when find me.

(Takes his bundle and hurries through the back door. Noise growing.)

JEKEL.— Woe unto me! And I bought me a new cap only yesterday!

SHIFRAH.— Thou fool, to think of thy cap, when thy mistress may be in the hands of the fiends.

RABBI.— Do not open thy mouth to evil. Let us continue!

“To lead us from darkness and servitude unto light and freedom — ”

SCENE VI

Enter CAPISTRANO followed by a disorderly multitude

CAPISTRANO.— Where is the child? Where is Andrew, the weaver's boy? You must know, for he was seen right in front of your house only day before yesterday. It was the last time he was seen alive. One of your accursed race gave him a toy and lured him into this house. From the cellar of this house his screams were heard distinctly, about midnight, last night. Give him to me right now, or it will be bad for you. Where is the child?

RABBI *(calmly)*.— Seek it. My house is open.

CAPIS.— You dare add insult to your crime? He whom you have crucified will find you out and bring you to justice.

RABBI.— I know only one God of justice who may afflict His servants, but will, in the end, let the righteous triumph over his enemies.

CAPIS.— Do not triumph too soon! (*To his retinue.*) Search the house from the cellar to the garret. Look into every corner. See whether the floor of the cellar does not show marks of recent digging. Knock at the walls to see if they are not hollow. We must find the little martyr. The Holy Virgin showed him to me covered with wounds, last night in a vision. Search diligently!

(*The people search in all directions. Only one monk and two armed guards remain. Fekel and a student make a move as if to mingle with the searching party. CAPISTRANO raises his hand menacingly.*)

CAPIS.— Nobody dare to move. We know your ruses, you generation of vipers. We know how you have rewarded the kindness of the Holy Father, who, but a few years ago, moved by Christian compassion, recommended to the princes to treat you more leniently. But you have badly rewarded his clemency, you stiffnecked people, whose ancestors have so severely tried God's longsuffering that He cast you away from His countenance forever. Your only God is the dirty Mammon. By your usury you have driven the good Christian people, your hosts and benefactors, to desperation.

(*The searchers pass over the stage, stop occasionally and murmur applause.*)

With fiendish delight have you tortured the blessed body of our Lord, bribing weak people to sell you a consecrated host. Our God is not your accursed demon of vengeance, but He will not allow His holy name to be defiled. He has found you out, proving your guilt by miracles. He has also laid bare your murderous plots and deeds, when you, sons of Belial, mocked at the sacrifice of our Saviour by torturing innocent children. He will bare your atrocious crime now.

(Two women return with frantic yells, holding the body of a little boy in their hands. People return from all sides and others come in from the streets joining in the demonstration.)

CAPIS. *(to RABBI).*— Now, you blind guide of a blind generation, has your God of justice found you out? *(To the people.)* Did the Holy Virgin tell me the truth? She has shown her unworthy servant too often tokens of her grace. Yes, *(pointing to the corpse)* just so had she shown me the poor martyr in the vision. Look here, how the tiny feet and hands are pierced!! Look here how his side has been stabbed! Look at these bleeding marks on his forehead, caused by thorns! Thus they mock at our Lord and Saviour, who died for their sins, if they only had accepted him. Yes! I can see the bright halo, adorned with the little stars, around His glorious martyr's head. . . .

(Shouts from multitude.)— I can see it! Bright as the sunlight! Five stars! How his eyes shine!

CAPIS.— I can feel that the numbness of my arm has gone, which so troubled me during this terrible winter in this cold climate —

MULTITUDE.—My eyesight is returning. The gout is gone from my arm. My stiff finger is whole again. My cough troubles me no more. Glorious saint! (*They kneel before the body and kiss its feet.*) Let us tear them to pieces. (JEKEL turns to flee, SHIFRAH faints.) Let us burn this cave of Satan! Into the fire with that sorcerer!

CAPIS.—Calm yourselves, my friends. Your Christian zeal is laudable and your indignation just, but our holy mother, the Church, is lenient, and above all, just, even to sinners. Calm yourselves, or the accursed heretics in your midst will point to your act as a justification of their own acts of highway robbery and sacrilege.

(*Shouts.*)—Shall these murderers escape punishment? They will bribe the King's judges. They have brought the Emperor to their side by their ill-gotten Mammon!

CAPIS.—Calm yourselves. No guilty person shall escape. I shall report to His Holiness that a new martyr has arisen, and you shall have a Saint of your own blood to plead your cause in heaven.

(*Shouts.*)—A new Saint! Saint Andrew, pray for us!

CAPIS. (*to guards*).—Take this man in irons to the Franciscan convent, and the others to the King's Justice, that he shall issue their warrants. Do not take them to the city court. (*Smiling.*) There they may not be properly treated.

(*Shouts.*)—Rebels and heretics, Jews and worse they are, these Aldermen. We shall tear them to pieces if they interfere with the course of justice.

CAPIS.—Go home, my children. We shall see

that ill-gotten Mammon shall not prosper, but no one shall accuse us of taking even an enemy's substance unjustly. (*To guards.*) Off with this murderer.

RABBI (*who has remained calm during the whole time*).— I am ready, and my God alone knows why He has sent this tribulation upon me. But if thou hast the slightest feeling within thee, thou wilt allow me to bid my wife farewell. She has gone on an errand of charity.

CAPIS.— Off with him. We shall find her and every one who is connected with this crime.

RABBI.— I shall speak to her in your language, in your presence.

CAPIS.— Off with him! Do not tarry! (*pointing to corpse*). See the imploring look in the eyes of the little saint. You shall have justice. Off with that gang of murderers.

ACT III

The RABBI'S Library. (Beth Hamidrash)

SCENE I

Congregational meeting in progress. Seven Councillors. Clerk writing.

RAPHAEL.—No, and a thousand times no! We must not stand idle by the blood of our neighbor! This case is not the cause of a mere neighbor; it is the cause of our beloved leader; it is our common cause, for it is a plot against all Israel.

PETH.—It is useless to block the path of Providence. The trouble is a divine visitation. I have warned Rabbi Israel but recently that this levity of participating in the feasts of the Gentiles, this fraternizing with those that are hateful to the King, will bring upon us divine punishment. Scripture and Talmud warn us against joining rebels. You ask the Rabbi himself. The Talmud says: "God made Israel swear not to rebel against their rulers and to submit to tyranny until He shall deliver them, as He has promised."

RAPHAEL.—And if they had laid the plot against you, would you advise the same course?

PETH.—I would take upon myself whatever God has decreed.

RAPHAEL.—And are you sure that this terrible plot is not merely a prelude to an attack on our whole community, to be followed by an expulsion

and spoliation, as has been done within our memory by the King's father in Austria.

PETH.— The monk is our enemy, but he would not go to the extreme. He told me that the guilty ones shall suffer, but that no one else would be molested.

RAPHAEL.— Why not say it plainly, Pethahiah? You bribed the monk, and obtained his promise that you will be protected.

PETH.— Who said so?

RAPHAEL.— You are witness against yourself. Or what else were you doing at the monk's cell? Did you speak to him about the Rabbi and the other prisoners? Did you offer any ransom?

PETH.— You need not teach me how to deal with priests, nobles, and rulers. I have done business with them for nearly forty years.

RAPHAEL.— Then it is so much the more your duty to give assistance in this case.

PETH.— It is easy for you to make appropriations which others shall pay. How long ago is it, that we had to pay a special tribute for war purposes? Then the city demanded one fourth of the cost of the new fortifications. The Bishop bled us for the cost of the restoration of the cathedral. Who is always assessed for the greater part of these sums? Where is this to end? To give large sums now would merely make them believe that we have immense treasures: it would be encouraging them to rob us. The great Rabbi Meir, of Rothenburg, died in prison, and would not allow any ransom to be paid for him, because he foresaw that such a payment would merely encourage further

exactions. If our rabbi is such a saint he will do likewise.

SCENE II

FRAIDLIN *enters*.

FRAID.— For mercy's sake, help. Help quickly, for it will soon be too late.

VOICES.— How do you come here ?

FRAID.— Do not ask. I shall tell you everything later. Now is no time to tell stories. Help quickly, or it will be too late.

RAPHAEL.— We respect your grief, Wife of the Rabbi, or else we would not allow a woman to come into the council of men.

FRAID.— Nor would I have come were it not that every hour of delay may mean death. But now act before it is too late.

RAPHAEL.— But your story might help us to find means of rendering aid to the victims.

FRAID.— Be it so! I was called out of the house during the Seder service to attend Milkah, the wife of the wayfaring man, who was killed by the soldiers. But it seems to have been a ruse that I cannot fully understand. As I turned the corner of the bath house, where the entrance to the adjoining poorhouse is, I was stopped by two armed guards, who held their halberds across the walk. What they said I do not know; the fright benumbed all my senses. Nor do I know what followed, until at the door of the Ursuline convent, a knight who had followed me from the door of my house —

PETH.—A knight had followed you? How did he happen to be there?

FRAID.—You had better not question me, Pethahiah, but be sure that I have nothing to conceal.

RAPHAEL.—Do not mind him. He believes that he has bought his own safety from the monk; but I would rather be a poor man in these days, in whose home nobody expects to find any plunder, than to have coffers full of jewels and bonds.

PETH.—Who says that I possess any wealth? My jealous ill-wishers will not be able to change the mind of our rulers who know my upright dealings.

RAPHAEL.—Nobody has informed against you, but you, trusting in your wealth, insult everybody. Let Fraidlin continue.

FRAID.—At the gate of the monastery, when a nun held a lantern before my face, I heard the knight say the guards should leave me there and that he would be responsible for this order. I cannot describe my condition, although a young and pretty nun spoke very kindly to me. I did not sleep a minute all night and did not know what it was all about until this morning a bailiff of the King's court came, and announced to me that I should be free if I would tell what I knew about the plot to murder Andrew, the weaver's son. When I told him that I had never seen the boy, and did not even know of his existence, he told me of the terrible things that had happened. The excitement, added to the exhaustion, the sleepless night, and the lack of food were too much for me. I fell in a dead faint. How long it lasted I do not know;

the nun wanted me to take a cup of milk, and when I refused on account of the Passover law, which she seemed to know well, she spoke to the bailiff, who told me to go home but not to leave the house so that I should always be ready for a hearing before the judge, and that no one should see me, except by permission of the captain, who is guarding our quarter.

RAPHAEL.— Your wonderful salvation may be a help to our cause. Do you know that bailiff who cross-examined you ?

FRAID.— I do not.

RAPHAEL.— Do you remember the name of the nun who was so kind to you ?

FRAID.— She told me her name. It was Sister Scholastica and she said I should regard her as a friend.

RAPHAEL.— That might be some help. I know the prioress of the monastery, as I sold there quills and parchment. I have at home a spool of goldspun which the nuns like for their sacred vestments. If I should take it to the prioress, with the request that she let me hand it to Sister Scholastica as a tribute of gratitude, I might be able to talk to her.

FRAID.— Cease your usual backdoor methods. The matter is urgent and the people are excited. I trembled as I heard the threats when I walked from the monastery to this place. We must have great sums. Send messengers all over Germany and Italy. Tell them that Rabbi Israel is in danger. Great sums!

PETH.— We must not encourage blackmail. They would always demand more. I shall see the

prioress, who pawned her tiara with me, and if she tells me who the bailiff is, I can speak to him, I know them all.

FRAID.— But it will be too late. If you mean well, offer security for a large sum, and in the meantime, messengers shall solicit contributions from our brethren all over Europe.

PETH.— If it is a divine decree nobody will be able to avert it. And I fear it is a divine decree. God is just. I have warned the Rabbi against his leniency to sinners. The Talmud says that a leader is held responsible for the sins of his flock. It was a divine warning that the Lord has denied to him the blessing of children.

RAPHAEL.— Shame and disgrace upon you, Pethahiah, to wound a woman's feelings in the bitterness of distress.

FRAID.— Thank you, Raphael, for your good will, but if the Lord decreed it as a punishment for my husband's sins, or mine, that we should be denied the happiness of children, I shall thank Him that He spared me the severer visitation of profligate children.

(*Voices.*)— Right! He deserved it!

FRAID.— Far be it from me to requite injury by injury. But you, Pethahiah, wished to know who the knight was who followed me from my house to the place where the guards arrested me. You shall know. He had come to our house with another knight, claiming that they were Marannos and wished to celebrate the feast. My husband, in the goodness of his heart, welcomed them at our table in spite of my hints that he should be careful.

It was this knight who brought the child's body to our house. I suspected him all the time, and in my sleepless night I collected my thoughts. I am positive that I saw him, when I was a child, at my father's house. He is Jekuthiel, your profligate son, who has forsaken the God of his fathers.

(*Voices.*)—Woe unto us, for if it be he, he will not desist until he has ruined us.

PETH. (*agitated and stammering*).—You do not know. You merely wish to wound my heart, tearing open old wounds.

RAPHAEL.—It is probable enough. He is known to have sworn revenge on you and on all Israel when you drove him out of the house.

FRAID.—Whether God visits on you your sins or not is not for me to decide, but you should take heed, lest pride in your wealth deceive you.

PETH.—I have cursed him. Why should God not have destroyed him? He killed his mother and made me dead to the world. He was my only child.

FRAID.—Must I, the woman, spur you to action. Go, go at once. See what you can do to help. It is the righteous who is suffering for you. If you help him, it will be accounted righteousness in the eyes of the Lord.

PETH.—We are lost. He will know no compassion.

(*The council departs.*)

SCENE III

FRAIDLIN, *in the study taking out an old folio and turning its pages.*

FRAIDLIN (*murmuring*).—Father's book that he

gave Israel on our wedding day. (*Wipes her eyes. The sound of steps startles her.* JEKUTHIEL standing before her.)

FRAID.— Do you come to enjoy the sight of the sufferings you have brought upon those whom you deserted and whom you wish to make more miserable, in order to advance your selfish and petty aims?

JEKUTHIEL.— You misjudge me, good lady. I harbor no ill feeling against you.

FRAID.— Do you believe that I shall cringe before my enemy? Sir Knight, I am a woman. I never lifted a sword. I could not hurt you if I would. You can make me miserable, but you cannot make me contemptible.

JEKUTH.— You grieve me by your suspicion. I shall not allow any one to do you evil, and, least of all, would I act against the laws of my order by insulting a woman, even a Jewess.

FRAID.— How kind of you to respect the women, whose fathers, brothers, and husbands you hate with such bitter passion.

JEKUTH.— Again you do me wrong. I may hate some of your people who deserve it, but I do not hate your people. I may say I love them, although my love does not make me blind to the fact that their sufferings are deserved. A band of boys cannot with impunity mock and so provoke an armed troop.

FRAID.— And when there is no provocation, you create it. Or do you, the son of Jewish people, believe that Andrew was murdered in our house, and that we perform such sacrifices annually? Who provoked in this case?

JEKUTH.— You provoke by your very existence. A small, scattered group too weak to defend itself is a provocation by living a life apart from its environment.

FRAID.— And so the only way for us to prevent your irritation would be to commit suicide and thus save you the inconvenience of killing us. This is, I presume, what you call the law of love.

JEKUTH.— I have not come to discuss law and love, Judaism and Christianity. I have come to offer you advice and assistance.

FRAID.— Assistance from you? What new game of deceit is this?

JEKUTH.— You are a woman, and a woman whom I respect. You are in distress and your anger is pardonable, but you must not, even in this condition, attack my honor as a knight.

FRAID.— Were I free I would say that I shall respect my duty towards one who is a guest in my house. But is my remark more impugning your honor, that the fact that you introduced yourself as a Maranno longing for the companionship of a Jewish feast?

JEKUTH.— I had to do it in order to be admitted. And I am Maranno. Indeed, I cannot suppress an occasional longing for the joys of my youth.

FRAID.— And this hospitality, so trustingly bestowed on you, you used to ruin your hosts! Is this a knight's honor? Or did you not bring the child's corpse into our house?

JEKUTH.— I did it for your benefit, you may take it upon my word of honor.

FRAID.— How kind!

JEKUTH.—Appearances are against me, but you will at least see that what I tell you is so probable that you will have to admit that it may be true. You know that Capistrano came here with the desire of stirring up the wild passions of the mob against the Jews. He needs this excitement in order to arouse the fanaticism of the population against the Hussites. He did it elsewhere. You knew it, for you tried to protect yourselves. Do me the favor to say that I am right.

FRAID.—If it soothes your pride, wounded by my doubts, I shall say that it is so.

JEKUTH.—Then you know also that if Capistrano had chosen to fire the mob against you here as elsewhere, he would have attained his end.

FRAID.—Therefore you gave him the semblance of a right, and to the mob a pretence of justice.

JEKUTH.—I stayed the inevitable catastrophe by giving the monk the opportunity of court procedure instead of blind mob rule, and by carrying out part of the plot myself I made sure that the plan would not be disturbed by zeal or malignant passion.

FRAID.—If I understand you right, you meant to protect me by placing the charge against my husband. How did I deserve such kindness?

JEKUTH.—Leave the cause alone. You have expressed doubt in the sincerity of my offer to help you. Let me set myself right by explaining the reason for my procedure. By carrying out one part of the plot, which would have been done by some one else in some other fashion, but with the same effect, I gained for myself freedom from the suspicion that I favor my people. I lured you

away from your home and brought you to the convent where you were safe from mob violence if the precautions for the preservation of order should be unavailing. I knew that my word would make you free, and you can now do whatever is in your power to save your husband, whose fate would have been the same, if not worse, had I kept out of his path. And now, whether I have convinced you or not, I am ready to assist you.

FRAID.—Forgive me, Knight Conrad — so they call you, if I heard aright — forgive, if I suspected you, but my own liberation only confirmed me in my suspicion. I do not know whether —

JEKUTH.—Speak out frankly, Wife of the Rabbi. I shall not bear you any grudge for whatever you may say.

FRAID.—I believe — I am convinced — that you are Jekuthiel, the son of Pethahiah.

JEKUTH.—And if I were?

FRAID.—I would expect you last of all men to be sincere in your protestation of friendship.

JEKUTH.—And why?

FRAID.—Because your father is the only one in this city who bears ill will towards Rabbi Israel.

JEKUTH.—And this, you think, should be a reason for me to feel likewise?

FRAID.—To be candid, No! Unless you should believe to reconcile him by —

JEKUTH. (*laughing*).—And you actually think that my father would become reconciled to what he calls my apostasy, if I brought misery upon a man whom he dislikes?

FRAID.—I do not. For whatever Pethahiah's

faults may be, he is sincere in his religion, and no misery would be so severe that he would not rejoice in seeing it inflicted upon you.

JEKUTH.—That you think so little of my intelligence as to presume that I should so misjudge his character, I can easily forgive, but that you should consider my character so mean that I should speculate on my father's filthy lucre by ruining an innocent man who never harmed me, this grieves me. It grieves me from you. Your face, your eyes, the tone of your voice and the manner in which you bore your misfortune would never have led me to seek in you such unfairness, even towards a deserter from your faith or towards a personal enemy.

FRAID.—Forgive me. I did not mean to hurt you, but you must admit that your offer of assistance must appear strange to me.

JEKUTH.—You shall not be left in the dark. When I saw you on that evening I resolved to redeem you. Your kindness in the midst of the anxiety which the presence of strangers created; your fearlessness when you were called to attend that poor woman; that composure which you preserved when they arrested you; all this worked so strongly on my memory that it recalled the happiest moments of my life. I saw you again —

FRAID.—Did you ever see me before?

JEKUTH.—It is many years ago. You were a child with large brown eyes and such beautiful black curls, the pet of the whole community, and especially of the young men studying at the Yeshibah. You were the only bright spot in that

gloomy place. Had it not been for you I could not have endured it one week, but finally, the storm had to come. I could not stand the religious discipline of your father, that constant bickering about the most trivial affairs of life, which made me always think of my father, who was so conscientious in all these things, but did not mind, in the least, ruining a hard-working farmer or decoying an easy noble into his trap, nor even weaving his webs to catch a brother in the faith who had offended his vanity or had crossed his path in business. "Away from this religion," was my determination.

FRAID.— But the sweet Passover festival made you long for a Jewish home. Or was all this feigned, too?

JEKUTH.— No, it was not. At least, not quite. I told you that I like to recall occasionally the memories of childhood. We study the practices of peoples in foreign lands, but we would not like to live among them. My desire to be at the house of the rabbi was inspired by different motives. In all these years when I was in Italy, first as student, then as soldier under almost all the petty tyrants, and finally joining Capistrano's crusaders, it was your picture which remained the only remembrance of my past, which I would not and could not blot out from my memory. Do you understand, Wife of the Rabbi?

FRAID.— I understand that your new religion made you forget the law adopted by it from its mother, "Thou shalt not covet."

JEKUTH.— Leave me alone with old and new

religion. The only true religion is that dictate of life, love, enjoy nature's gifts. This means serving our Maker.

FRAID.— And you know of no sin? Robbing your neighbor, ruining his home, destroying the sweetest memories of innocent children, all this is no sin to you?

JEKUTH. (*laughing aloud*).— Sin, old bugbear of vicious tyrants, allied with priestly schemers and supported by a stupid rabble. From your father's Yeshibah I was expelled because I was caught practising fencing on the Sabbath. They would have stoned me to death had they had the power; they would have inflicted upon me such torture as I would not allow to be inflicted on a vicious dog, if the state would permit them to practice their law. What is sin? Your husband was busy in the week preceding your feast, was he not?

FRAID. (*embarrassed*).— Why do you ask? He always is.

JEKUTH.— What occupied him? I suppose a woman showed him a knife which stuck somewhat loosely in the handle, and she wanted to know whether she should put it into boiling water before cementing it, or afterwards. Why? Because to use it in the wrong way on the Passover would be a mortal sin, and one who did it would be punished here and in the hereafter. This is what you call sin! Sin! Sin! Using a fork or a knife with a loose handle!

FRAID. (*excited*).— And your Christian religion, with these saints who plot with our apostates to rob and to murder?

JEKUTH. (*laughing*).— Do not get excited over my Christianity, fair lady. You might be wasting your theology on the wrong party. I am at present engaged in butchering people who believe in taking a sip of wine at religious exercises, while they ought to leave it to the priests. You, fair lady, may not know how wicked it is to desire a share in the priest's wine at the mass. This is almost as bad as, or perhaps still worse, than using a knife on Pass-over without waiting for the rabbi's advice on how to cement its handle.

FRAID.— I pity you. You are as the blind and as the deaf. You do not see God's work, and you do not hear His voice. I pity you. My husband takes life as a duty, to which he must give all his forces. My father, whom you charged with inhumanity, kept, at the risk of his life, wounded Hussite warriors in his house and nursed them until they were well.

JEKUTH.— Believe me, Fraidlin, it was not my intention to hurt your feelings. Your father was indeed a good, a noble man. It was his religion which stunted his humanity.

FRAID.— I do not bear you any grudge, Knight Conrad, any more than I would hate a blind man, who, ignorant of his affliction, curses the sun because it does not shine. You were unfortunate in your home. I was blessed in mine. I knew my great-grandmother. She was more than four-score and ten when I learned to talk, and one day I noticed a bad scar on her wrinkled cheek. I asked her how she had received it and she told me the story. She was a little child when our people

were charged with having desecrated the host. Her Christian nurse saved her from the burning home, pretending that she was her own child. She then saw her own grandfather and grandmother stand on the pyre and heard them sing until the smoke choked their voices. She heard them recite the benediction, giving thanks to God Almighty, who had privileged them to die for the glory of His holy name. I am a woman, and not learned, and cannot argue with you about what your heathens say, but I desire no more happiness than this good woman had in life and death, and I am ready like these ancestors of mine to thank God who has privileged me to die for the glory of His name.

JAKUTH.—Leave me alone with this great-grandmother talk, which might well be proof that Hera was offended because she had not been given the beauty prize by Paris; it was the justification of your remoter ancestors when they sacrificed innocent babes to their Moloch. What are the dead great-grandmothers to us? Our life's instincts are the only divine commands. To your husband only duty binds you. Stern, cold, Jewish duty. You acquit yourself of this duty by procuring for him that freedom which otherwise he will never obtain. Answer honestly! No! Do not answer! I can read your answer in the fine lines of your face and in these deep, childlike eyes, which proclaim the privilege of human nature to follow its own behest! How could you ever love a man who is a walking code? A man who married you because the law says he must take a wife?

Who will divorce you in the no distant future because the law says he must have children.

FRAID.— Knight Konrad! Is this the vaunted etiquette of your order that allows you to touch the most sensitive spot in a woman's heart?

JEKUTH.— How hard it is for a noble sentiment, warped by soulless bigotry, to understand true sympathy? What can a man be to you, whom you married because the law says you shall obey, and who married you because of the law. Law! Nothing but that absurd, immoral Law! If you would only listen to your best teacher! Your prophet said: the only true law is that which is written in your own heart. Follow its behest! Fraidlin! I have longed, I have suffered, I have brought what is the greatest sacrifice for a man of honor — I have sinned for you. Does your heart not respond to this appeal?

FRAID.— You are a traitor to my — to your people.

JEKUTH.— What is your people to you? Be yourself. Let your heart answer, and not your mouldy law.

FRAID.— My heart has for the traitor of my people only hatred softened by —

JEKUTH.— Sympathy for the man.

FRAID.— Softened by contempt for the fortune hunter.

JEKUTH.— Wife of the Rabbi! you shall repent of your words. My revenge shall be relentless, for it will be the law of my heart.

FRAID.— Your threats have no terror for me. I do not desire any lot different from that of my people.

JEKUTH.—Fraidlin! Your heart has not spoken. Your heart is asleep. I hear steps. Consider for three days before you decide!

FRAID.—I have decided. *(Exit.)*

SCENE IV

FRAIDLIN *as before*. SCHOLASTICA *enters*.

SCHOLASTICA.—Peace be unto this afflicted home.

FRAID.—Peace is on your lips and a double-edged sword is in your heart.

SCHO.—Why so bitter? I have come to offer you hope and peace.

FRAID.—So did Knight Konrad. At least, he called it so.

SCHO.—I do not know what brought him to you, but I came, driven by the love of Him for whose sake I left father and mother, for whose sake I abandoned all happiness of woman, and who has given me His covenant of peace.

FRAID.—May I ask you how I deserved your interest in my cause?

SCHO.—We are called to attend the suffering, no matter why they suffer. Our gates are open to the wounded highway robber, who reached them just in time to escape the grip of the sheriff. They are open to the fallen woman, from whom men and women turn with a shudder of disgust. We nurse the victims of battle though they may have raised their arms against Christ and His Church.

FRAID.—I am not guilty of such a crime nor did I seek the protection of your convent; in fact, I was brought there very much against my will.

SCHO.— Indeed, you have not called me, but I came. I came, drawn by the ties of kinship. Like you, I have passed through the valley of weeping, but I have found rest at the foot of the Cross on which the Saviour shed His blood for all mankind, and for His people above all.

FRAID.— Listen! What can your faith give me? It has taken my husband. He is all I have in this world, for I have neither father, mother, nor child. I may yet share the fate of my people, and still you offer me as consolation the belief that the cause that brought all this suffering upon so many innocent people is the cause of truth and justice.

SCHO.— Hard as it may appear, so it is.

FRAID.— And you, in whose face I read the love of truth and goodness, believe that a rabbi, who teaches kindness to the dumb brute, would murder an innocent child? Oh, if you knew him!

SCHO.— If I knew him! (*correcting herself.*) I certainly do not think ill of him, but I do not know all your practices; they differ in various lands. And while I shall not say that these charges are true, I must say that the God of justice has some plans, even when He permits injustice.

FRAID.— It is a very convenient thing for the wicked to say that God will turn their wrongdoing to some good use.

SCHO.— Your affliction excuses your bitterness. But do you not see that destructive floods will water the soil, and that killing frosts will stay the dread plague? May it not be His plan, even by undeserved suffering, to show you the way of truth and make you look up to Him, whom you have pierced?

Your husband is a man, learned in the law and beloved by his people. Might he not have been chosen to teach them the error of their ways? Let him study his own scriptures and he will see that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, and if he opens the eyes of his flock to this great truth, then suffering will bring glorious fruit and your lives will be saved.

FRAID.— You mean, sister, if I understand you right, that I shall persuade my husband to accept Christianity in order to save his life.

SCHO.— Not in order to save his life; nor shall he profess the belief in the Son of God by word of mouth, but by conviction, arrived at after prayerful and earnest thinking.

FRAID.— If you knew our people you would find it unreasonable to expect that the word of a woman could change the views of the learned rabbi.

SCHO.— You may be the instrument chosen by God.

FRAID.— And if I declined this call? For I feel that the only weapon left to us in this battle against injustice is heroic suffering. I feel that your boasted mercy is hypocrisy, that your so-called battle for truth is but love of riches, craving for power, and a fiendish delight in acts of brutality hidden behind a pretence of humility?

SCHO.— You cannot decline, for you are a woman. You do not realize what your stubbornness and your blind submission to the customs of your people mean for your husband. He is on trial under the charge of murder and of sacrilege. Innocent or not, he will be severely questioned.

FRAID.— He will answer by telling the truth, and he has nothing to conceal.

SCHO.— Maybe! I hope it for his sake. I believe it for yours. But his judges cannot, dare not take his word for it.

FRAID.— No witness, unless he is malicious, can testify to his guilt.

SCHO.— You do not know what investigation in court means. Your husband will be put through the first test. His hands will be tied behind his back, they will lift him up from the ground by a rope passing over a pulley and let him hang in this way; and if he will not confess they will fasten weights to his feet, increasing them every two minutes until he confesses.

FRAID. (*with a shudder*).— He will not, for he has nothing to confess.

SCHO.— If he does not confess he will faint from exhaustion.

FRAID.— And then they will have to free him unless they murder him outright.

SCHO.— You do not know the world, sister, although you live in the world, as they say. They will put him through the second test. Do you know what this is? They will tie him to a ladder, his head strapped tightly, so that he cannot move. Strong ropes will be tied around his arms and legs, and the executioner will tie the other end of the rope to his body and throw his full weight upon it. The rope will cut deep into his flesh, cut through skin, flesh, and muscles, sometimes — I have seen it for I have ministered to the poor wretches — breaking the bone. Take here the thread which

you use for sewing, tie it around your finger and pull the ends with your teeth as hard as you can, then imagine yourself lying naked on a ladder with sharp rungs penetrating your flesh, while you are unable to turn even your head to seek relief, a movement so natural to a sufferer, as you can see when standing by a sick bed. Listen! can you, a woman, think of your husband suffering such agony without even attempting to rescue him?

FRAID.— Oh, spare me, spare me, sister! What can I do? What have I done to deserve such cruelty from you?

SCHO.— I cannot spare you, for you must know the truth, the full truth, in order to learn your duty. I must tell you all. If your husband shall survive this torture, there is something still worse waiting for him. He will be put on the rack, head downward, and water from a wet rag will trickle down his throat, drop by drop. Small as it may seem in comparison with the physical suffering of the second degree, the sensation of choking, the sickness of the stomach, and the dizziness of the head are far worse than any other pain that can be inflicted on a human being. I have seen the most hardened criminals, who have gone through it, confess their crimes rather than go through this torture again. Can you love your husband if you refrain from attempting to do what alone can save him?

FRAID.— Sister, is this your religion of love? The most ferocious brute does not revel in such devices to inflict misery upon its victim.

SCHO.— The world has its laws. Our Church

does not shed blood or inflict pain, but she cannot stay the secular arm in doing what is necessary to punish evildoers and to prevent crime.

FRAID.—Is there nothing to save my husband from this terrible fate?

SCHO.—Nothing, except what I have told you, and you will do it. It is the advice of a sister,—of a real sister. As Abigail Pineiro I was known in the world. I am the daughter of an Italian banker. We are not brought up as you are here. I read Dante and Petrarch, played the guitar, and occasionally made a sonnet. In Padua, where my father had his business —

FRAID.—Padua! That is the place where Rabbi Israel studied.

SCHO.—Indeed, there are students there from all parts of the world. They came to our house to exchange their drafts, and often — I am grieved to confess it—to borrow money at high rates of interest. My father allowed me to converse freely with them, to read the poets, and to play music. When I had completed my sixteenth year, my father decided to marry me to a wealthy young man of our city. I refused, for —

FRAID.—Your heart was set on one of your Christian friends. Your education had taught you to despise your people.

SCHO.—You are mistaken. I loved a young man, a student at the house of the rabbi. I had hardly spoken to him. He, perhaps, did not even know me. I myself was not conscious of my love for him at that time. All I know was, that I would not be the wife of the man whom my father considered rich enough to make a settlement upon me

equal to my marriage portion. I detested the man chosen for me, before I had ever spoken a word to him.

FRAID.— And therefore you chose the convent ?

SCHO.— No, sister. My heart was still set on the world and its vain joys, and as my father was determined to break my will, I determined to elude him. I asked him to grant me a few days for deliberation and with the aid of a German student who often came to our house, I availed myself of the opportunity offered by Yom Kippur,* when I was alone in the house and fled to a village twenty miles from Padua, where I found refuge in a farmer's house. Money and jewelry I had taken along—

FRAID.— On Yom Kippur you took money, which was your father's and drove in a wagon, trusting your honor to a young man who is not of our people ?

SCHO.— I had not turned away from the Jewish faith yet. The young man who posed as my protector told me that he would take me to his home in Germany, where I could live with my people, and where I could earn a livelihood by teaching our language and music. Soon, however, I discovered that he desired me for himself as men do who look upon woman as a toy to satisfy their fleeting passion. Fearing the danger, lest, shunned by me, he might betray my hiding-place to my father, and feeling that by my action I had forfeited forever the love of him whom I loved above all others, I went to the convent where I found peace of soul and where I buried my passion, though my love is still alive.

*Day of Atonement.

FRAID.— And you never longed for father and mother, or for the sweetness of domestic life ?

SCHO.— You here are raised in a cage like the poor songbirds who would not live in freedom, because they have unlearned the use of their wings. You pass from the father's hand to that of the husband, just as one of those birds would pass from one cage into another, and after fluttering around anxiously for a while begins its life over again, picking the seed from the new trough as if it never had known another. I was raised in freedom and would not give it up.

FRAID.— And your present life — forgive my frankness — has it more freedom than you enjoyed under your parental roof ?

SCHO.— I have chosen it. My life is of my own choosing and has a purpose, just as it would have had a purpose had I found the man I was longing for.

FRAID.— And you renounced all happiness of woman for this man's sake ?

SCHO.— I did. . . . And do you know who he was for whose sake I left parents, for whose sake I gave up all that is dear to a woman's heart, for whose sake I renounced life and renounced a prospect for which the companions of my youth envied me ? He was from this country. We called him Israel Tedesco.

FRAID.— Sister Scholastica !

SCHO.— He is Rabbi Israel Bruna now. If you love him as I did — as I do now, in spite of my vows, in spite of the fact that he is the husband of another woman, and in spite of my acquiescence in this

fact — you will do what is the only means of saving his life. I hear the shrieks of agony as he is placed on the rack; I see the executioner approaching him with hot iron and with burning sulphur to increase his pain. I see him gasp for breath, I see him faint, I see him slowly reviving to become more wretched than before. And you are sitting here quietly, enjoying life and health, while every bone in his body is aching —

FRAID.— Sister, if you really loved him you would know him, and if you knew him you would see that it is hopeless to expect that he would renounce his religion in order to save his life.

SCHO.— But if you love him you will do it. If you see the truth of that faith which the God of the Universe has endowed with the power to conquer the world, your conversion will be a source of gratification to the holy man whose whole life is given to the winning of souls. He will see in it a sign from heaven, encouraging him in his labors, and he may grant you the life of your husband. He will. I shall unite my efforts with yours. Come with me, sister; sister in flesh and sister in suffering! Be my sister in spirit! The Saint will speak to you. God has given him wonderful powers over human souls. The light of truth will appear to your be-dimmed eyes and you will save that life which ought to be so precious to you. Come, sister, come at once!

FRAID.— Would I not lose him if I thus saved his life?

SCHO.— How selfish! To think of yourself when you ought to think of him and of nothing else.

(Knock at the door.)

SCENE V

Enter MEINHARD. SCHOLASTICA startled.

MEINHARD.—Has my appearance frightened you? I hoped to find you here. I have been longing for this opportunity for years.

SCHO.—I am here to minister to those who need me; others may not speak to me without the consent of my prioress.

MEIN.—And if I asked for a short interview on the ground of our former relationship?

SCHO.—It would be the same. My duty is defined by the laws of my order.

FRAID.—The yoke of the law which you boast of having broken.

SCHO.—Mock as you will. I have chosen and I have found my peace in the law of love.

FRAID.—That love which permits you to sneak into peaceful homes and reward hospitality with slander, plots of murder, and destruction.

MEIN.—Forgive, good lady. Your reproach does not strike me. Konrad invited me to see a Jewish ceremony and a handsome woman. He kept his promise in both respects. The only part of the plot to which I had pledged myself was to disappear when noise in the street would forebode trouble.

FRAID.—And the corpse of the child?

MEIN.—I knew nothing of its existence. I was told that it was necessary to carry a bundle in order that we may appear as strangers who had just arrived in the city.

FRAID.—But now you know that this bundle

was brought by your friend. Does not your honor require that you confess the truth and save the victims of tyranny? I was told that this was the first duty to which a knight is pledged.

MEIN.— How noble you are, good lady, to think so highly of us! If I came before the tribunal and made such a confession they would say that I had been bought by the Jews, and my testimony would help you no more than your husband's protestations of innocence.

FRAID.— Sister Scholastica, your religion teaches you to gather in the outcast, but forbids you to vindicate the innocent and to tell the truth when falsehood is advantageous to your schemes of power and wealth.

MEIN.— Fair lady, if your preachment is meant for me it is directed to the wrong person. I have no share in these ecclesiastical quibbles. My cup is not the cup of the Lord's Supper, but the cup of the convivial table. This world belongs not to the just, but to the powerful. Righteousness is with the strongest sword and the weak cause is always wrong.

SCHO.— You blaspheme!

MEIN.— Maybe! Some people call it so. But when I knew you as Abigail Pineiro you were not shocked by the religion which teaches that joy is goodness and the law of life the law of righteousness.

SCHO.— It may have been through you that I learned to see in resignation true joy, and in doing good to others my highest duty.

MEIN.— Let us not spoil this opportunity with childish quarrels. The occasion is too serious and

too rare. It will, perhaps, never return. I know, I feel, that it cannot be your earnest desire to live this life of self-deception forever, Abigail. You despised me because you believed that I was trifling with your life and that I wanted to make you miserable for the sake of a frivolous pleasure. Perhaps you were right then, I misunderstood you, I misunderstood myself, I felt deeper than I knew. Since you took the veil I have not had a moment's rest. I accused myself of having destroyed your life. I say it here in the presence of this afflicted woman. You take interest in her husband's lot. The pathos of love has touched your heart; the recollections of your youth have come back to you, for you plead again the cause of your people. You wish to see the rabbi free. Am I right?

SCHO.— You are. Why should I wish to conceal it?

MEIN.— You wish to help him. I shall assist you.

FRAID.— Good Sir Knight! The Lord has shown you the way to our home.

SCHO.— Do you plan an act of violence, Meinhard, or do you expect to arm the enemies of our faith against the Saint?

MEIN.— Leave your Saint alone! I have followed his army long enough to know something about his saintliness.

SCHO.— Beware, Knight Meinhard! No one will put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless!

MEIN.— Don't worry, Abigail. He may go on and heal the lame and the blind, as far as I am concerned.

FRAID.— Oh, pray, pray tell me what I— what can be done to free my husband? Shall I go to the priest?

MEIN.— It would be of no avail. He knows no human feelings. But I can influence him. My father is the burgomaster and hates Capistrano. He hates that fanaticism which uses the Jews as scapegoats in order to cater to the low instincts of the rabble. He denounces the policy which drives them to usury, and then murders and robs them for that crime.

FRAID.— Oh, you are the first Christian I met who is just to our people. How often has my husband denounced the merciless usurers!

MEIN.— You may perhaps overestimate my love for Israel and my faith in their goodness, for I, or rather my father, paid dear for their readiness to help. Sister Scholastica would be able to tell you something about it, had her father allowed her some insight into his books. Two soldi for every scudo a week I had to pay when I had spent my money before the next draft arrived, and sure enough, that happened each time.

SCHO.— You know that I had no share in his business transactions.

MEIN.— I readily grant it, Abigail, but I loved you in spite of all that. I went to your father's bank, although Samson Monselice offered me a loan at one soldo. I went to your father because I wished to see you, and for your sake to-day I shall do my best to save the Rabbi.

FRAID.— You spoke to me as a sister, give him a word of encouragement.

MEIN.— My father stays the rebellion. Some Councillors and many of the city people are for the Hussites. If my father will threaten to join them, should the disorder not be checked, Capistrano will release his victims. Your saint possesses some practical wisdom and does not always trust in his miracles.

SCHO.— And you will advise your father to threaten brother John with such intentions?

MEIN.— I will.

SCHO.— And what part shall I play in this scheme?

MEIN.— None whatever! You shall rend the veil which obscures your eyes. You shall open your heart and be what you have been. I shall conceal you safely with me for a few weeks and then you shall follow me to your sunny home. I shall go as ambassador to the Court of Naples. No one will know you there, and you will live the life of which you dreamed when I first saw you.

SCHO.— Knight Meinhard, you misjudge me. I shall preserve the peace of my soul, even at the cost of that life for which I would gladly lay down my own.

FRAID.— O sister, did you not teach me to sink myself before him whom I love?

SCHO.— I cannot. I can give my life, but not my soul.

MEIN.— Do you know Rabbi Israel?

SCHO.— I did know him when I was very young.

MEIN.— You were a woman then, and woman you remained even in your cloister. The law of your order is the law of your life. Abigail, I can understand you.

ACT IV

SCENE I

Chapel in the Franciscan convent. SCHOLASTICA,
CAPISTRANO.

SCHOLASTICA (*kneeling before the confessional*).— Man of God, I accuse myself of sinful lust. I had hoped to deaden the flesh when I took the veil, and for years I thought that I had succeeded. But since I followed your host, desirous of living in the shadow of your sancity, and to minister unto the sick and the wounded of your army, the world has risen in me anew.

CAPISTRANO.— Did you implore the aid of the Holy Virgin, my daughter?

SCHO.— At night, when my thoughts troubled me, I slipped out of my cell into the church and knelt at the altar of the Mater Dolorosa. By the dim light of the oil lamp, which some pious Christian had placed before the picture, I noticed a stern look of rebuke in her eyes.

CAPIS.— You must not be deterred by such a sign. It may be a mere delusion, produced by Satan, who troubles your soul.

SCHO.— Holy man of God, it was not a delusion. I saw it as distinctly as I used to see the expression of pain, coupled with compassion, in the face of my mother when she rebuked me. I could see the frown on her forehead and the motion of her eyes as I can see the lines on your face now.

CAPIS.— Suppose it were so. Implore the aid of the Holy Virgin again, pray to her in earnestness and zeal.

SCHO.— I did, night after night. I prayed to her, who had given up her Son to a death of ignominy, because it was the will of the Father. I implored her to teach me to despise the world for the Son's sake.

CAPIS.— And ?

SCHO.— It came as a ray of benign light from her eyes, and, comforted, I returned to my cell.

CAPIS.— Thou hast been deemed worthy of a sign of grace, my daughter. Did this sign ever repeat itself ?

SCHO.— It did not, and this makes me more miserable. It began Wednesday of the Passion week, just that night when the trouble arose with the Jews. The following night I was sorely tempted by the Evil One. I could hear the sweet tones of the lute, and I saw myself on the hills around Lake Como. I saw the vintner's feast with dancing and singing girls. I saw my father at the table covered with dainties, and the brass candelabra over it, making the room radiant with light. I saw my mother, dressed in white silk with a pearl necklace and a gold brooch at her neck. She held her arms open as she used to do when I was a child. Horrorstricken, I fled to the church and knelt before the picture. But all that I saw was a stern look of reproach, and my mother passing between me and the Virgin, stretching out her arms, and since that night my peace has gone.

CAPIS.— Thou hast forgotten the Saviour's

words: "I have no mother." It is Satan's old trick of tickling the flesh. Didst thou chastise thy flesh?

SCHO.— I did, holy man of God. I fasted and lashed myself till the blood streamed down my back; and this morning, during the mass, I fainted from exhaustion, so that the mother superior forbade me to continue my penance.

CAPIS.— Hast thou vowed to continue this life of penance?

SCHO.— I have.

CAPIS.— And thou wishest to be released of thy vows?

SCHO.— No, saintly father! I asked the mother superior to let me seek thy advice. Man of God, I have seen thee heal the blind and the lame. May I not say unto thee, even as the poor sinner said unto our glorious Saviour, "Help my unbelief?"

CAPIS.— Satan conjured up before thee the pictures of thy father and thy mother. Didst thou not see any other vision? Conceal nothing from me. A little fact may help to show the crevice through which Satan enters thy soul.

SCHO.— I conceal nothing, man of God. How could I, asking thy help?

CAPIS.— Have thy thoughts returned to a friend of thy youth, for whose sake thou hast sought refuge behind the sacred walls of the convent?

SCHO.— My father, thine eye penetrates into the innermost chambers of my heart, although, when I chose the life of holiness it was not for man's sake. I had lost the faith of my fathers, and my heart panted for the real joy of life, which neither music nor poetry nor the convivial table could give me.

I was disgusted with the selfishness of men, who recklessly sacrificed the lives of women to their crude, carnal pleasures, and therefore I resolved to live for others.

CAPIS.—Examine thyself closely, my daughter. Were all the men whom thou hast met in the world so selfish as thou hast described them?

SCHO.—When a mere child, not being quite fifteen, I knew a man who was as near Christian perfection as any one of our people could come. He was always calm, desiring no earthly advantage for himself, and always willing to help others. He never had an unkind word even for Christians, who treated us not as Christ said we should treat our enemies.

CAPIS.—Didst thou enter the monastery because he spurned thee?

SCHO.—He never knew of my affection, nor did I know of it myself, until my father wanted me to marry another man.

CAPIS.—What brought thy thoughts back to him at this time?

SCHO.—I learned that he was in danger and the desire has come over me, not to possess, but to help him.

CAPIS.—Why is he in danger?

SCHO.—God has given thee the power to read men's souls. I would not conceal aught before thee. I am speaking of Rabbi Israel.

CAPIS. (*startled*).—Israel? That son of Belial? Dost thou know that he is charged with the heinous crime of murder and blasphemy, that he crucified an innocent child in order to mock our belief in the

sacrifice of Jesus, who offered up His body in order that mankind shall be redeemed from sin?

SCHO.—Holy man of God, I owe thee my life. Thou hast shown me the path of truth, but in this case thou art mistaken. I do not know whether Jews ever perpetrated such an abomination.

CAPIS.—Is Satan beginning to lure thee back to the atrocious superstitions of thy youth?

SCHO.—Superstition. Let me confess it. I saw a great deal of it at home. They used to save a piece of their unleavened bread from Easter to Easter, saying that it was a protection against evil spirits. And sometimes I think that what I see about relics and sacred water is not different.

CAPIS.—My daughter, my daughter! Satan has widened the crevice in thy heart and can enter it freely.

SCHO.—My father. Help my unbelief, and I shall blindly follow thy teachings for the Holy Virgin has chosen thee to open the eyes of the blind.

CAPIS. (*flattered*).—Apage, Satanas. (*Making the sign of the cross.*) Thou canst not win me over by flattery. How knowest thou?

SCHO.—When the Holy Virgin smiled on me in that one glorious night, her eyes turned in the direction of St. Francis's altar. I followed her, and in the midnight darkness of the church I could see thy figure loom up, and I saw St. Francis lifting up his hands to bless thee.

CAPIS.—Art thou sure this was not a delusion?

SCHO.—My father, it was a vision, as clear as the appearance of the Holy Virgin.

CAPIS.—And thou couldst testify to it before the bishop and the brothers of the convent?

SCHO.— I can and I will, as I hope that by the grace of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and by the grace of the Holy Virgin, and the intercession of the saints, I shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

CAPIS.— Thy faith is strong, my daughter, and I trust, that whatever Satan's wiles may be, they will never entice thee away from the path of Christ.

SCHO.— And mayest thou be my guide in all temptation, thou beloved disciple of thy master, St. Francis. But thou who knowest human hearts as no other man does, wilt know that I speak the truth when I declare that I never saw nor heard, in my Jewish life, of any law or custom demanding the sacrifice of Christian children.

CAPIS.— They are shrewd, these sons of hell, and know how to hide their practices from those who might betray them.

SCHO.— Even if they do practice such horrors, I am sure that this man Israel is incapable of doing so. I saw him plunge into a swollen stream, and, at the peril of his life, rescue a Christian child, that was being carried away by the flood. I saw him during the terrible plague carry food and water to the stricken houses which many Christians were afraid to approach.

CAPIS.— If this man, while sitting in darkness, practises Christian virtues, may he not be brought into the full light of the truth? Perhaps he is chosen to lift the veil from the eyes of his people.

SCHO.— I spoke to his wife about it, but she would not listen.

CAPIS.— Thou must not slacken in the service

of the Lord. It is the arch enemy, again, who whispers in thine ear that all thine efforts are bound to be futile. Perhaps thy doubts and thy torments are divinely ordained to help thee win a precious soul for Christ, who holds out His hand to a rebellious people.

SCHO.—Canst thou hold out no other hope? Canst thou show me no ray of light? Holy man of God, whom the Mother of God pointed out to me as the healer of my soul, canst thou offer no balm for my wound?

CAPIS.—God is merciful to sinners. He will let no soul perish that trusteth in Him. Offer Him the gift of thy heart. Ask the Virgin of perpetual help to give thee strength to do thy duty.

SCHO.—My father, is there no hope for the innocent victim?

CAPIS.—The soul that sinneth will die, death temporal and eternal.

SCENE II

CAPISTRANO *leaves the confessional suddenly. MEINHARD and FRAIDLIN have shortly before entered the chapel and remained in the background. As CAPISTRANO leaves the confessional, MEINHARD advances.*

MEINHARD.—My father, thou art wise as thou art pious and wilt not despise a word of warning when it comes from the humblest of thy children.

CAPIS.—The wisdom of the world is strange to me. "I glory in the foolishness of God, which is

wiser than men." What you men of the sword and of the council offer as wisdom is to yield right before might. But whom bringest thou here?

MEIN.—She is of Israel's benighted children, the wife of the man who faces death for murder and blasphemy.

CAPIS.—The wife of the Rabbi, that arch-fiend, who tortured an innocent child to death? If thou comest to offer money in ransom thou comest in vain. If thou hopest pardon, tell me what thou knowest; but the whole truth! No subterfuges!

FRAID.—The whole truth! Well then. As thou believest to obey the call of my master, my husband is innocent.

CAPIS.—And in order to tell me this thou hast brought Knight Meinhard as witness. A suspicious witness indeed! One who was found in thy company when the deed was committed; a Christian who forgot his obligations so far as to participate, and be it merely as a passive bystander in the feast of Satan. A son of our Holy Church who is not altogether free from the suspicion of heresy!

MEIN.—Father! This to me who has taken the cross and sworn to stamp out heresy?

CAPIS.—Just the same, there are wolves in the fold. Your father put stumbling-blocks in our way. He refused to let me try these wretches before the ecclesiastic tribunal, wishing to prove from musty parchments that our tribunal, confirmed by the Holy Father, is an encroachment on the privileges of the city. He has even sent messengers to our gracious lord, the King, hoping to beguile his youth. But the heart of the King is in

the hand of God. I shall prove that your father favors heresy. He often allowed the heretics, in spite of the warning of the bishop, to indulge in their blasphemous feasts. The reputation of this good Christian city has been dragged in the mire through him, when he permitted these heretics to march behind the chalice.

MEIN.— My father has indeed not consented to my taking the cross, but you do him an injustice when you say that he favors the infidels. He merely is opposed to severe measures, which, he fears, will drive this city into the camp of the enemy, because many aldermen will side with the Hussites, and because your persecution of the Jews will bring their wealth to the assistance of the enemy.

CAPIS.— Has not this ungodly Mammon already secured them assistance? I know little of the world, Knight Meinhard, nor do I wish to be dragged into its unholy affairs. But some witnesses in this trial assert that there are nobles, connected with the most prominent families of this city who have mortgaged not only their estates and their jewelry, but even their very souls to the enemies of Christ.

MEIN.— My father, how you misjudge me! I would not deny it, and could not, for you are a Saint, as holy as any we invoke in the litany.

CAPIS. (*with feigned humility*).— Apage Satanas! Do not tempt me, for I am but a mortal. Apage Satanas! (*Makes the sign of the cross.*)

MEIN.— Forgive me, father. But I may say that I am a sinner and my debts are the wages of

sin. Yet I owe nobody my soul. The man to whom I am indebted — But you care not for the things of this world.

CAPIS.— If they help to strengthen the kingdom of God you may talk of them freely.

MEIN.— This is above the plain mind of the soldier. I should hate to offend you with worldly talk.

CAPIS.— I shall not be offended unless your tale be one of your boastful stories of sin.

MEIN.— My father, God forbid that I should thus offend your ears. You wrongly suspect me of favoring the Jews for the sake of my creditors among them. Listen then; the man to whom I am indebted has given aid to the Hussites. Of me he takes in order to pile up wealth; to the Hussites he gives because he hates Christendom.

CAPIS.— And you did not tell me of this story as soon as you learned of it?

MEIN.— I feared to trouble thee, holy man of God, with affairs of this sinful world.

CAPIS.— You are very delicate, Knight Meinhard. But tell me, is your creditor among the prisoners?

MEIN.— He is at liberty, for he knows how to escape the watchfulness of men like you, my father, who are too inexperienced in the ways of the world. The aldermen are his debtors.

CAPIS.— Inexperienced as I am in the affairs of this world, it would seem to me that these debtors should be glad to deliver him to the tribunal. Would you not think so, Knight Meinhard?

MEIN.— Indeed thou art a man of God, for thou knowest not the wiles of this world. If this Jew

be imprisoned and his property seized for the King's treasury, these debtors would have to pay to the King who would not be likely to show them any mercy, while the Jew, as matters stand now, has to make concessions.

CAPIS.— And the Jew?

MEIN.— He saves himself for the time being. As to the future he counts on the Hussites, whose new Fort Tabor was built with money extorted from the Catholics.

CAPIS.— Are you sure that your desire to get rid of debt is not at the bottom of these charges? The Church will not tolerate the machinations of her enemies, but she will not serve as a tool of those who, by a pretence of serving her, wish to escape the consequences of a life of libertinism.

MEIN.— How you misjudge me, man of God, to whom I looked up as the model of justice and charity!

CAPIS. (*murmuring*).— Apage Satanas. Holy St. Francis, banish from my thoughts vanity and evil inclinations. (*Crosses himself — aloud.*) Wife of the Rabbi, what knowest thou of thy people's alliance with the enemies of the Church?

FRAID.— I know nothing of what passes in the world, outside of our quarter. My father taught me to honor those whom God has placed in authority, and not to rebel against them, though their rule be harsh.

CAPIS.— Thou puttest thy words wisely indeed, and showest good judgment. What is thy name, my daughter?

FRAID.— They call me Fraidlin, father.

CAPIS.—Fraidlin. This means joy in your language. Is it not so?

MEIN.—Indeed it is wonderful how well thou hast learned to understand the barbarous sounds of our northern tongue. This is surely the work of the Holy Ghost, who has chosen thee for thy great mission.

CAPIS. (*murmuring*).—Apage Satanas. Fortify me, St. Francis, against temptations and vanity. (*Crosses himself; turning to FRAIDLIN.*) Does thy husband teach as thy father did?

FRAID.—Certainly he does. And he said it recently in my hearing to Pethahiah, the elder of our community.

CAPIS.—This Pethahiah, who offered the council a large sum to defray the cost of my sojourn! He and thy husband are very close friends, I understand.

FRAID.—Thou art misinformed, father, Pethahiah is not my husband's friend.

MEIN.—Even I could have told you that, little as I know about the spiritual affairs of Israel's community.

CAPIS.—And how did you learn of it?

MEIN.—Everybody knows that Pethahiah refused to contribute anything to the cost of the rabbi's trial.

CAPIS.—The man loves Mammon.

MEIN.—It is not this alone, for in such a case the Jew considers it a meritorious piece of work to help his brother-Jew. But Pethahiah's only son became a Christian and the Rabbi is said to have preached that this was a divine punishment for

Pethahiah's sins, who brought the ill-will of the Christians on the Jews by his heartless usury.

CAPIS.— Is this true, Fraidlin ?

FRAID.— Not quite, father. My husband would not easily reprove a sinner publicly, but he told Pethahiah so in our own house on the day of our misfortune.

CAPIS.— And is it true that Pethahiah refused to contribute to thy husband's release ?

FRAID.— This is true.

CAPIS.— And this heartless moneybag, who is dead to the entreaties of his own people, is also a traitor to our gracious King, and a supporter of his enemies and those of our Holy Mother Church ! Is this so, Fraidlin ?

FRAID.— We women of Israel care not about the men's business. I know not whether he desires your victory or the victory of those who march behind the chalice.

CAPIS.— This is their old trick of playing the innocent, just as their spies had instructed Rahab. Oh, generation of vipers !

SCHO.— Man of God, she speaks the truth. The women of Israel are never consulted in affairs of the community. They are the housekeepers and bearers of children.

CAPIS. (*to FRAIDLIN*).— Have your people not met Prokop, the priest who desecrated his orders when he returned from one of his highway robberies which he calls battles ? Did they not furnish him bread and wine ?

FRAID.— I do not know, Father Johannes.

CAPIS.— Do not call me father. Call me

brother, for I mean well with thee. Did not this man Pethahiah expostulate with thy husband for approving of your people's attitude.

FRAID.—No, brother Johannes. Pethahiah wished these people to be punished and Rabbi Israel said we should not be too severe with any one who did wrong. He never advised anything against our King's will.

CAPIS.—I am glad to hear it, for thy voice has the ring of truth.

MEIN.—The Rabbi is innocent of any plot. His life is turned away from the affairs of the world.

CAPIS.—Why are you so eager to plead his cause, Knight Meinhard? Will he make that old Pethahiah release his grip on you?

MEIN.—I broke bread at his house. I came as a stranger and he bade me welcome and seated me at his table. It was the night when he was arrested. I would not wish harm to befall him through me.

CAPIS.—Through you! You mean through his devilish sacrifices in which you participated. Those services of Satan bewitched you.

MEIN.—Curiosity brought me there, but I am sure the man never committed a crime. Let Sister Scholastica answer.

SCHO.—The Knight speaks the truth. Rabbi Israel walks in darkness, but he is incapable of murder.

CAPIS.—So you said before. But if the man is so saintly he will see the error of his ways and find his salvation here and hereafter.

MEIN.—How I would like to possess your holy

zeal, to feel that I am an instrument chosen by the Holy Ghost.

CAPIS. (*crossing himself*).— Apage Satanas! It may have been under the guidance of the Holy Ghost that you, Knight Meinhard, participated in the feast of Satan.

MEIN.— How relieved I feel, my father. But while I am willing to lend my arm to the cross, my tongue is weak, and my mind not equipped with the learning necessary to evade the tricks of Satan's arguments.

CAPIS.— I shall not put your faith to such a test, Knight Meinhard, since Satan has such power over you, but thou, Fraidlin, wouldst certainly desire to see thy husband. It is against the law that any one who is under trial for life receive visitors. I hope, however, that the judges will yield to my request and allow thee to see thy consort.

FRAID.— Thou art good, brother Johannes. May the Lord reward thee!

CAPIS.— And thou art willing to tell thy husband that by walking in the path of truth and by leading his people in this path, he will find mercy in the eyes of God and man. Thou understandest?

FRAID.— I do, brother Johannes, but —

CAPIS.— No "but," when God calls.

FRAID.— It will be useless. The women of Israel look to the men for advice.

CAPIS.— Fortitude, my daughter, is necessary in doing God's work. The disciples of the Master were flogged and stoned and crucified, but they wavered not. Your scribes and priests persecuted

them, but the Church is built upon an adamantine rock. Everywhere, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof is the true God worshipped, and a clean offering. Look at your people. Everywhere they are downtrodden, despised, and oppressed. Like Cain are they hunted from place to place.

FRAID.— He knows it, father. But he told me it was a test of our faith, and that we may truly say, “ All this has come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee.”

CAPIS.— And were his heart hardened as thou sayest, canst thou not behold the manifestations of Christ and proclaim His kingdom. For thee great things may be in store. With us, the women are not dumb handmaids, thou mayest yet have a place befitting thy nobleness of spirit and grace of manner. Many a noble would be happy to proclaim thee his consort, and give thee a place among princes.

FRAID.— Is this your advice, brother Johannes ? That I shall forsake my husband and betray the fidelity which is sacred among Jews as well as heathen ?

CAPIS.— To infidels we owe no obligation.

FRAID.— Well, then, let me answer briefly and distinctly. I will not do it, and I would not if I could. Rather than save my husband’s life through falsehood I would see him perish under all the tortures that Sister Scholastica so vividly portrayed. Rather than save myself by betraying him, I shall die with him and consider myself happy to share his fate.

SCHO.— My sister, thou knowest not what thou speakest. Consider thy words.

MEIN.— Give her time, my father. The Church is long-suffering and merciful.

FRAID.— I demand no time from those who teach adultery and plan murder.

CAPIS.— Well, then, thou shalt have what thou desirest. (*Opens the door and calls a guard.*) Take this woman into custody, and know thou, the door of thy prison shall not be opened until thou expressest the desire to profess Christ: for thou art as guilty as thy husband.

FRAID.— Innocent as he is!

SCHO.— Have mercy, man of God!

CAPIS.— No mercy for the sinners.

FRAIDLIN *taken away by the guard.*

ACT V

SCENE I

Court of the Inquisition. CAPISTRANO presiding over the tribunal. Prelates, knights, clerks, armed guards. ISRAEL.

CAPIS.— Israel, you may still receive the grace of a merciful God if you confess your guilt which is clearly proven. Turn to Him, whom you pierced, as did your fathers.

ISRAEL.— I cannot confess what I have not done.

CAPIS. (*to executioner*).— Question him according to the ordinances.

(*ISRAEL taken to the torture chamber. Groans are heard.*)

SCENE II

PETHAHIAH is brought in.

CAPIS.— You son of hell, have you aided the enemies of our gracious lord, the King, and of our holy mother Church?

PETH.— Oh, you holy and wise man, whose wisdom is like the wisdom of Solomon, you certainly must see that this charge is a machination of my enemies. All the members of the council of our city, may the Lord increase their glory, will testify that when I heard of thy coming I offered a hundred shock groschen to celebrate this glorious event, because, while not of thy faith —

CAPIS.—Thou hadst sense enough to know that thy sins shall be visited on thee.

PETH.—Our God gives wisdom to those who are not of our faith, and power to those who are placed on the thrones. Ask the governor how I, in these bad times, gave three thousand pounds at only three deniers a week to aid our glorious King in the war against his accursed enemies, and now, although I have lost heavily, I —

CAPIS.—A little later. Don't be too hasty. And then answer directly. Didst thou give money to that rebel against God and His anointed? Didst thou give money to Prokop?

PETH.—Prokop? I do not know him. I never laid an eye on him. I would not allow him to pass the threshold of my house. An enemy of the King is my enemy, and sooner would I —

CAPIS.—Be not so profuse and answer directly. (*Takes a small piece of parchment from the table.*) Dost thou know this bond of Prokop?

PETH.—No, holy man, I never saw it. How could I?

CAPIS.—Quiet! How could this have been found in a hole in the wall of thy house, covered carefully by boards, behind a wardrobe?

PETH.—Oh, holy man, this was exacted from me by violence. Six armed men entered my house at night and placing the points of their daggers over my heart, demanded that I give them fifty schock. It was life or death, and so I had to give it to them, and the bond I hid in a place where I would never lay an eye on it again. I would have reported it to the king's sheriff, but I feared their revenge.

CAPIS.— These wicked people, these highway-men!

PETH.— So they are indeed, my father. How truly thou hast spoken.

CAPIS.— There is only one thing I would like to have explained.

PETH.— Ask, holy man, father of mercy, man of justice, ask! Thy servant shall answer thee according to the full truth.

CAPIS.— What about the interest of four pennies for the shock? Did they also force thee, at the dagger's point, to accept it?

PETH. (*stutters*).— Four pennies, Prokop,— they — given to me. I never, never demand such a sum. They mocked me by writing it. Thou seest it, for thy wisdom is given to thee by —

CAPIS.— Thou never hast demanded such a sum?

PETH.— God forbid! The letters-patent of the king allow three deniers and this is my limit. I obey the King, for the King is put in authority by God himself, and I fear —

SCENE III

MEINHARD *enters*.

CAPIS.— This is good; but (*taking up another parchment*) this bond of Knight Meinhard's stipulates five deniers on the shock. Was this also written in jest?

PETH. (*embarrassed*).— These young people are reckless. They never pay, and one is happy if they

pay the interest for two years. Afterwards, according to the law of our gracious King,— may his throne be exalted! — one must wait one year and one day before the pledge can be sold, and often it happens that the pledge is found to be stolen.

MEIN.— You accursed son of the devil.

PETH.— O forgive, noble knight, I am not speaking of you, for your honor is as free from any spot as the white robe of the high priest. But you see there are some, even among the knighthood, who take advantage of the kindheartedness of an old man and bring him a pledge which is not their own, and then, having lost the interest for a year one has to return it for the sum lent on it.

CAPIS.— This does not seem so bad when your capital has become doubled in the mean time.

PETH.— But consider our taxes, holy man! To the King, to the city, and to the canon of the cathedral!

CAPIS.— I do not wish to meddle with the business of the authorities, and thou obeyest their laws?

PETH.— With joy in heart!

CAPIS.— I wish to know whether this interest stipulated in the bond of Prokop was stipulated in jest.

PETH. (*gaining confidence*).— Most assuredly, holy man. How could it be otherwise?

CAPIS. (*taking another parchment*).— How about this letter of George Podiebrad, the arch-rebel, who is plotting to overthrow the throne of our gracious lord, King Ladislaus?

PETH.— I never received such a letter. I can swear to it by our holy Torah. It is the law of our kings from times immemorial to respect our oath.

CAPIS.— There is no need for such an oath. I know that the letter was not received by thee because the messenger was intercepted by our soldiers.

PETH.— I assure thee, holy man, I should have torn the letter to shreds, and handed the messenger over to the king's sheriff.

CAPIS.— Good and noble! But listen what the letter says. George Podiebrad recommends to thee Ziska, the rebel captain. He will be surety for any sum that you may lend to him, and in addition, when he shall be king — listen, Pethahiah — you shall have exclusive banking privileges in this city and freedom of business in all royal cities.

PETH.— I? To break my fealty to my lord the King? Never! Not for all the treasures of King Solomon!

CAPIS.— Good and noble Pethahiah! But I did not read one line at the end. Podiebrad says he is sure that thou wilt serve him this time as faithfully as before and that thou wilt help Ziska as thou didst help Prokop.

PETH. (*stammering*).— It is not true. It is a lie. It is a plot to ruin me. I never saw Podiebrad. I never even heard of Ziska. A plot and invention of my enemies.

CAPIS.— How the righteous are persecuted! The bond of Prokop — jest. The letter of Podiebrad — a plot. And the murder of that poor boy — another plot of your enemies. Your agreement with the Rabbi that you would kill the child and he would take charge of the blood, jest again. The Rabbi confessed! Dost thou hear? That confession — all jest! Jest, of course, jest!

PETH.— Confessed! He!

CAPIS.— Wilt thou come out with thy confession before they put the question to thee more distinctly? As distinctly as they put it to him?

PETH.— He confessed! The Rabbi! Confessed! Indeed!

CAPIS.— Thou wishest to confess too?

PETH.— I have nothing to confess, holy man. He did it all by himself. I learned it only afterwards, and had it not been for our holydays, I should have told the authorities. I should surely have reported it the day afterwards, had the terrible deed not been discovered. Oh, how miserable I was all the day! How my heart was broken.

CAPIS. (*to the guard*).— Bring the Rabbi.

SCENE IV

ISRAEL *carried in, bleeding and exhausted*.

CAPIS.— Listen, thou servant of the evil one. Thy partner has confessed, but he puts the blame on thee alone.

ISRAEL.— He is as innocent as I am.

CAPIS.— Oh, I know your tricks taught by your accursed Talmud. In vain have the holy fathers tried to free you from the snares of Satan.

ISRAEL.— I am not wont to speak in equivocations. Pethahiah has no share in the crime.

CAPIS.— So thou didst it all by thyself?

PETH.— Did I not say so, holy man? My enemy has cleared me. Thy wisdom has penetrated into his heart, and as I love and admire thee,

I shall give thee the mortgage on Knight Meinhard's property that thou mayest build on it a church in honor of St. Francis, who must have been a great and good man to have such wise and kind disciples.

CAPIS.— Is this perhaps jest also?

PETH.— How would I dare to jest with such a great man?

CAPIS.— This is really a generous offer. We shall see. Our saint shall have a sanctuary in this city. I thought of it myself, and your synagogue seems to me to be as good a place as any.

PETH. (*frightened*).— Our synagogue?

CAPIS.— Be so good as not to interrupt me. I have to deal with this sinner. Israel, didst thou kill that child, pricking him with needles, nailing him to the cross, pressing a crown of thorns on his forehead, and finally piercing his side? Make a full confession and God will be merciful.

ISRAEL.— As I hope in God's mercy, I did not do it, nor did Pethahiah, nor did any of our people ever commit such a crime.

CAPIS.— Pethahiah, thou hast said that the Rabbi had done what he now denies. Dost still insist that thou hast told the truth?

PETH. (*embarrassed*).— I — I said he said —

CAPIS.— Clearly please, yes or no, unless we shall question thee more distinctly.

PETH.— Yes, holy man, I said it.

CAPIS.— This means that this fiendish deed is part of your accursed superstition and is done every year. Hast thou ever done it before?

PETH.— I? Never! God forbid that I shed innocent blood, the blood of Christians who are my —

CAPIS.—Not so much eloquence, please. If thou hast never done it before, wast thou not surprised when the Rabbi told thee what he had done.

PETH.—Why dost thou ask me?

CAPIS.—Answer directly.

PETH.—I—I do not know.

CAPIS.—How thy memory fails thee. We will help thee to remember. (*To the guards.*) Torture him!

PETH.—Listen, holy man, be not so hasty, for thou art wise and the wise man does not judge hastily. I shall confess everything. I was present, but I did not do anything. Jekel, the Rabbi's servant, gagged the boy, the Rabbi said the prayer, and the scholars pricked the child with needles.

CAPIS.—The scholars? What are their names?

PETH.—Names! I do not know, I forgot. They were strangers.

CAPIS.—Thy memory is beginning to fail again. We—

PETH.—Oh, I remember now. They were Hayim of Neustadt, and Aaron of—of—I believe from Franconia, Wuerzburg, if I remember right.

CAPIS.—Take thy time. I see thou beginnest to remember.

SCENE V

JEKUTHIEL enters during the last words.

JEKUTH.—Thou liest, old sinner. Believe him not, brother Johannes. He lies for the sake of his ill-gotten Mammon.

PETH. (*collapsing*).— My sins have visited me. My own flesh and blood rises up against me.

CAPIS.— What sayest thou ?

PETH.— I did not see anything. I am old and sick, and I feared the rack.

CAPIS.— Jest again! Let us see! He will get his memory back.

CAPIS (*to the guard*). — Give him the first test. Bring me Pasquale. (*A strong, burly executioner enters.*) Here is work for thee, my son. We have a hardened sinner. Tie him to the ladder and throw thyself with thy full weight against the rope. Never mind if his old bones crack. He has money enough to pay. Bring the boy.

(PASQUALE *grins*. PETHAHIAH *howls as he is dragged out.*)

SCENE VI

Enter JEKEL.

CAPIS.— Thou dost know of what thou art accused. Didst thou do it ?

JEKEL.— I tried to but they would not let me.

CAPIS.— What didst thou try ?

JEKEL.— To angle trout in the White Brook.

CAPIS.— Do not trifle here, thou son of the devil. Didst thou gag the boy ?

JEKEL.— I had no chance. They grabbed me from behind and had me on the ground before I knew that any one was present.

CAPIS.— And then ?

JEKEL.— Four others came.

CAPIS.— Who are they.

JEKEL.— I did not know all of them, only Anthony, the miller's, and Ulric, the swordmaker's son.

CAPIS.—What! Christians!

JEKEL.—What else do you think? A Jew would not do such things.

CAPIS.—Do not play the innocent. What didst thou get for thy work?

JEKEL.—Get? Work? What I got? Beaten I got, and my waistcoat was torn. A new one at that, or rather it was an old one, but I had received it that very day from Eva, Phineas the hideseller's wife.

MEIN.—Brother Johannes, you are wasting your skill. Cannot you see that the poor fellow is an imbecile?

CAPIS.—Knight Meinhard, you are singularly eager to defend the Jews.

MEIN.—I cannot bear injustice, and though its victim is a Jew. This old sinner, Pethahiah, richly deserved his fate, though what he told here is not true. That child was dead when it was brought to the Rabbi's house, and all the wounds were inflicted on a corpse. Master Eberlein, the surgeon, will prove it to you.

CAPIS.—These Jews with their Mammon can prove anything. Their ancestors bribed the guards to testify that the Master's body was stolen, and that he never rose from the tomb.

SCENE VII

SCHOLASTICA *enters*.

SCHO. (*pointing to ISRAEL, who is lying on the ground*).—Holy man of God! As my Redeemer liveth, I know that this man is innocent. Why

should the glory of Christ be bought with the blood of the innocent? The Lord has chosen thee to do marvelous things in His name. Forfeit not thy eternal bliss by judging rashly.

SCENE VIII

PETHAHIAH *is carried in. He has fainted and lies with closed eyes, unable to speak.*

CAPIS.—Has he confessed?

EXECUTIONER.—He has repeated all his former statements, and added that he gave money to buy the boy from wayfaring people who had stolen him from a farmer in Bohemia.

CAPIS.—This trial was conducted with all that justice and lenience which has always graced the Church of God. We shall not pronounce the sentence of guilt until the culprits shall have been given every chance of exculpating themselves. (*To ISRAEL.*) Dost thou still persist in denying thy crime? Remember that God is merciful to the sinner who repenteth.

ISRAEL.—Brother Johannes, my body is broken. I have not many hours to live, even if you let me run my course, and in the presence of God, who is my maker and yours, and before whom I shall soon appear, I declare that I am innocent of the death of this child, and so are all the others whom you condemn, even this poor sinner, Pethahiah, who in his desire to save his wretched life turned witness against himself.

(PETHAHIAH *tries to raise himself and grasp the Rabbi's hand.*)

CAPIS.— Their hardness of heart has never left these people, whom God has rejected because of their ingratitude. They shall go to the place where there is howling and gnashing of teeth. But they shall not be condemned before all means of mercy shall have been exhausted. Does any one present know of anything in favor of these accused, which has been overlooked in their just and impartial trial?

JEKUTH.— Holy man of God, this woman (*pointing to FRAIDLIN*) was maliciously accused by a self-confessed traitor and slanderer. I swear it by my honor as a Knight of the Cross. My duty as a champion of woman's honor forbids me to say more, but as this sword has been blessed by thee for the defense of our holy faith, she is innocent.

CAPIS.— We shall take your word, Knight Conrad, if she profess Jesus, the Saviour, in whose honor you have vowed to wield the sword. Jesus shall make thee free, my daughter, free, body and soul. My daughter, come and give glory to His name.

FRAID.— I thank thee, brother Johannes, and I forgive Knight Konrad, and all those who have wronged me and brought this misery upon me and my people, but I desire no better lot for myself than that of my people, who die the death of the righteous.

SCHO.— Brother Johannes, I have left my kin, have abandoned home, father, and mother, and a life of comfort and pleasure in order to serve Him who innocently died an ignominious death. But He forgave His offenders, while you sacrifice to Him innocent victims, as if He were the idol of the heathens. Think, before you give the hangman your orders!

CAPIS.—Sister Scholastica! Hast thou forgotten the words of the Master, “I have no mother, and I have no brothers”? Cast off this false mercy! For those who sin against the Holy Ghost there shall be no mercy!

ISRAEL (*rising with difficulty*).—Mercy we expect from God alone, who is a God of justice. But from those who desecrate His name by the testimony of falsehood we desire no mercy. Their mercy is a disgrace, as the Holy Scripture says: (*To PETHAHIAH, who turns to him with outstretched hand*) I forgive thee with all my heart, and the God of Israel, who is long-suffering, will forgive thee, when thou sayest with all thy heart, “May my death be an atonement for all my sins.”

(PETHAHIAH *whispers it, and the other Jews repeat it aloud.*)

SCHO.—Oh, how blind I was to be misled by empty words. Away with a creed which is a mere babble of the lips; Jesus prayed for His enemies on the Cross. You have made the innocent descendants of His enemies pay a thousand times and more for the sin which He forgave. Theirs is a martyrdom more glorious than His. Rabbi Israel, I have looked up to you from my childhood as to a guide in life. I shall be with you in death. Curse (*pointing to CAPISTRANO*) upon murderers! Fiends! Wild beasts who desecrate God’s holy name by acts of brutality. “May my death be an atonement for all my sins.”

(*Loud.*)

Make room on the faggot, hangman! Holy father Johannes Capistrano! Vain, earthly glory

is thy piety! Bloodthirsty and cruel is thy pretended zeal for God! Thy God is the God of falsehood. I shall profess the God of Truth. Rabbi Israel, teach me the prayer of martyrs, and let us all join in it, grateful to the God of Israel for our martyr lot.

(The hangman leads them to the faggot that is looming in the background. The hymn is heard, the voices grow weaker and finally cease.)

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